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# The Human Intellect: Liberation or Limitation?

## *Some Notes on* ʿAql *in Classical Islamic Mysticism*

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**Abstract**

The article discusses various attitudes towards the human intellect (*ʿaql*) in classical Islamic mysticism, as reflected in key mystical writings composed from the third/ninth century to the rise of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the sixth/twelfth. It begins by presenting the basic challenge that the concept of *ʿaql* posed for the mystics of Islam and then proceeds to analyze diverse approaches to the intellect in works that were written in both the east (*mashriq*) and the west (al-Andalus). Special attention is given to the impact of Neoplatonism on mystical attitudes towards the intellect. The conclusion to the article offers general observations on the problem of *ʿaql* in classical Islamic mysticism, and attempts to explain the tendency of certain sixth/twelfth-century mystics who were exposed to Neoplatonic thought to reduce the role of the intellect in the mystical quest for God.

**Keywords**

al-Andalus – al-Ghazālī – Ibn al-ʿArabī – intellect – *iʿtibār* (contemplation) – mysticism – Neoplatonism – reason and rationality – Sufism

Reason versus revelation is a prominent and recurring theme in the religious literature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and may be addressed from different perspectives.[1] The following article aims at highlighting one aspect of

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1 Among the numerous studies dedicated to this theme, the reader may find the following introductions particularly useful: Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*

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this perennial issue, namely attitudes towards the human intellect in classical Islamic mysticism. The discussion will be by no means exhaustive; the objective is to elucidate fundamental tendencies and main approaches as reflected in key mystical writings composed from the third/ninth century to the rise of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī in the sixth/twelfth.

The main body of the article (besides the Introduction and Conclusion) will be divided into four paragraphs. Paragraph 2 will discuss the central and positive role that was accorded to the intellect in the mystical systems of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) and his heirs, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (third/ninth century) and primarily al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). Paragraph 3 will point to a somewhat opposite approach that became particularly widespread in the Sufi tradition, which had begun crystallizing towards the end of the third/ninth century; as we shall see, many Sufis held a skeptical if not negative view of the intellect. The fourth and fifth paragraphs will be dedicated to mystics, in both the *Mashriq* (the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world) and al-Andalus, who were influenced in varying degrees by Neoplatonic thought; as will become apparent, although Neoplatonism usually prompted a favorable attitude towards the intellect among such mystics (paragraph 4), some chose to interpret Neoplatonic conceptions in a non-intellectual and often in an anti-intellectual way (paragraph 5). Jewish mystical thought, particularly in al-Andalus, will also be referred to in paragraph 4 and in the Conclusion to the paper.

Before I begin, a word on terminology is in order. In what follows I will often employ the general terms "mystic", "mystical", and "mysticism" rather than "Sufi" and "Sufism", given that not all mystics mentioned below necessarily belonged to the mystical tradition known as *taṣawwuf*. Some predated the appearance and crystallization of this tradition, notwithstanding their heavy impact on the development of its teachings, at least in certain areas (al-Muḥāsibī); others were not considered as Sufis or did not define themselves as such (al-Tirmidhī); while still others were Neoplatonic mystics (Ibn Masarra), or otherwise attempted to integrate Neoplatonic or philosophical

(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952); Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962); Arthur J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London: George and Unwin, 1965); Barry S. Kogan, "Understanding Prophecy: Four Traditions," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Steven Nadler and T. M. Rudavsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 481–523; Kenneth Seeskin, "Reason as a Paradigm in Jewish Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: Volume 2: The Modern Era*, ed. Martin Kavka et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 637–62; Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Markschies, eds., *Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

notions with Sufi ideals (al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʿArabī). More can be said on this matter, but these remarks will suffice for now.[2]

## 1 Introduction: The Challenge of *ʿAql*

*ʿAql*, variously rendered as intelligence, intellect, mind, or reason, is a most intriguing term in the history of Islamic thought. The Arabic verb *ʿaqala* means to understand or know something, but it also signifies (perhaps primarily so) the act of restraining and confining, for instance, when binding the folded leg of a camel; this signification, as we shall see, resurfaces in mystical discussions of *ʿaql*.[3] In the Qurʾān, the root *ʿ.q.l.* and the verbal forms derived from it are mainly employed in a religious context, and denote the human capacity to perceive the Divine signs in creation (*āyāt*). Such a perception leads one to believe in God and in the prophetic mission of His chosen ones, whereas disregarding the Divine signs causes disbelief and brings about spiritual perdition.[4] The religious connotation of the term *ʿaql* is likewise apparent in *Ḥadīth* literature, where it is also associated with correct moral behavior and with practical wisdom or acumen.[5] A full analysis of the term *ʿaql* and its derivatives in the

2 For a more detailed discussion see Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–7; see also Yousef Casewit, *The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barrajān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1–8, 67–83.

3 Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1874), 5: 2113 (s.v. *ʿ.q.l*).

4 Navid Kermani, "Intellect," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006), 2:547–9; Binyamin Abrahamov, "Signs", in ibid., 5:2–11; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 6–7.

5 See, for instance, Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *Kitāb al-ʿaql wa-faḍlihi*, ed. Luṭfī Muḥammad al-Ṣaghīr and Najm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Khalaf (al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Rāya, 1989); Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986), 129–30; Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla l-qushayriyya* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyya, 2000), 303–4 (*bāb al-maʿrifa bi-llāh*); Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Makkī, 7 vols. (Mecca: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā l-Bāz, 2004), 1:116–8, 120, 123–4 (*kitāb al-ʿilm*, *bāb* 7), 5:1551–2 (*kitāb dhamm al-ghurūr*, *bayān aṣnāf al-mughtarrīna*). In one famous tradition, *ʿaql* is mythically portrayed as the first created being, and certain versions of this *ḥadīth* that are found mainly in Shīʿī sources describe its primordial battle with *jahl* ("ignorance", "savageness"). For this tradition see, in addition to the aforementioned sources, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Zuhd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1983), 387 (*Zuhd muḥammad b. sīrīn*); Abū l-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, ed. Ṭāriq b. ʿIwaḍ Allāh b. Muḥammad

Qurʾān and *Ḥadīth* naturally falls beyond the scope of this article. Still, one may safely say that both in the Qurʾān and in many *ḥadīth*s, *ʿaql* does not signify the human ability to attain the truth independently by intellectual or rational means, but rather points to man's conformity with religious beliefs, ethical values, and social norms. It is thus far removed from the modern-Western notion of reason.

Matters were obviously quite different for Muslim philosophers. In the tradition of medieval Islamic philosophy, and following the Hellenistic and Late Antique heritage, *ʿaql* came to be perceived as the main tool that enables man to think and to discover the truth; *ʿaql* became *νοῦς* (*nous*). According to the philosophers, man's individual intellect corresponds to or reflects a macrocosmic principal, embodied either in a universal intellect, which stands at the summit of the cosmic hierarchy (as in the classical Neoplatonic scheme), or in a series of ten cosmic intellects, as envisioned by al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), and the Ismāʿīlī Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020). The ultimate goal of man was to connect himself to the universal intellect (or the tenth, active intellect in the decimal systems) and thus actualize his intellectual potentiality, through the study of philosophy and by means of an ethical-ascetical way of life.[6] The Muʿtazila similarly believed that human

and ʿAbd al-Muḥsin b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusaynī, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayni, 1995), 7:190–1; Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Khālidī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999), 266 (chapter 56); ʿAlī b. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa-l-afʿāl*, ed. Bakrī Ḥayyānī and Ṣafwat al-Saqā, 16 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1985), 3:383; Ignaz Goldziher, "Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente im Ḥadīṯ," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 22 (1909): 317–44; Josef Van Ess, *Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra*, 4 vols. (Brill: Leiden, 2017–19), 1:416, 2:196; Amir-Moezzi, *Guide*, 7–8; Mushegh Asatryan and Dylan M. Burns, "Is Ghulāt Religion Islamic Gnosticism? Religious Transmissions in Late Antiquity," in *l'Ésotérisme Shiʿite: ses racines et ses prolongements*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 60–1, 79–80; Mushegh Asatryan, "Shiite Underground Literature Between Iraq and Syria: "The Book of Shadows" and the History of the Early Ghulat," in *Texts in Transit in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann and Robert G. Morrison (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 141–3; Alexander Altmann, "Ibn Bājja on Man's Ultimate Felicity," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 67, 76–7.

6 See Alexander Altmann and Samuel M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 185–95; Altmann, "Ibn Bājja," 73–107; Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Tj. De Boer and Fazlur Rahman, "ʿAḳl," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2006), 1:341–2. On al-Kirmānī, in whose teachings the *imām* is indispensable to the process of human intellection, see Daniel De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'intellect: néoplatonisme et gnose Ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Ḥamîd ad-Dîn al-Kirmânî*

reason is vital for understanding God and existence and for interpreting religious tenets. Moreover, their positive attitude towards reason eventually crept into more conservative streams of Islamic theology, namely the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools. Although in principal, the Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs subjected human reason to Divine revelation much more so than the Muʿtazilīs (not to mention the philosophers), many of them did believe in the human ability and in fact obligation to comprehend, articulate, and prove religious principles in a rationalist way and very often in accordance with logic or logical methods.[7]

As to Muslim mystics from the third/ninth century onwards, it seems that they faced quite a challenge. On the one hand, central to Islamic mystical thought is the belief that real knowledge cannot be acquired intellectually. Only by following the path of piety and world renunciation (however one chooses to define it), devotion and spiritual meditation, can man become truly knowledgeable, if the Lord so wishes. In such a case, knowledge is bestowed upon the mystic directly by God and is superior to knowledge that is intellectually obtained since like prophecy, it derives from God and results from Divine election. On the other hand, Muslim mystics did operate within a culture that cherished learning, revered books, and encouraged intellectual debates; consequently, they were forced to systematize their views and formulate them in writing. Furthermore, from a relatively early stage in the development of Islamic mysticism, viz. from the third/ninth century onwards, mystics became

(*X^e/XI^es*) (Louvain: Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 1995); Paul Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1999); Maria De Cillis, *Salvation and Destiny in Islam: The Shi'i Ismaili Perspective of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018).

7 See Daniel Gimaret, *La Doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 183–91, 211–8; Richard M. Frank, "Reason and Revealed Law: A Sample of Parallels and Divergences in Kalām and Falsafa," in *Recherches d'islamologie: recueil d'articles offert à Georges C. Anawati et Louis Gardet par leurs collègues et amis* (Louvain: Peeters, 1977), 123–38 (I thank Dr. Jan Thiele for these two references); idem, "Knowledge and Taqlīd: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ashʿarism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109.1 (1989): 37–62; J. Meric Pessagno, "Intellect and Religious Assent: the View of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī," *The Muslim World* 69.1 (1979): 18–27; Arthur S. Tritton, "Reason and Revelation," in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 619–30; Van Ess, *Theology*, 2:59, 69, 73, 137–40, 3:270–5, 4:233–4; Binyamin Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition," *The Muslim World* 82.3–4 (1992): 256–73; idem, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Khaled al-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 408–31; and cf. the interesting typology in George F. Hourani, "Combinations of Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics," in *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 270–6.

very much aware of and indeed began to be inspired by theological and philosophical conceptions—including those related to the human intellect. Yet if God continues to communicate with His chosen ones and intimate "friends", the *awliyā'*, as many mystics claimed, then what might be the function of *ʿaql* in attaining the truth—if such a function exists at all?

## 2 Envisioning the Creator by Contemplating His Creation: From al-Muḥāsibī to al-Ghazālī

Muslim mystics developed early on different strategies in order to meet the challenge of *ʿaql*. One such strategy was to revert to the Qurʾānic understanding of the root *ʿ.q.l.* The foremost proponent of this approach was al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), the renowned mystic-theologian, who dedicated a short treatise or chapter (*bāb*) to this subject entitled *Māhiyyat al-ʿaql wa-ḥaqīqat maʿnāhu* ("The Essence of the Intellect and its True Meaning").[8] Al-Muḥāsibī defined *ʿaql* primarily as a natural faculty (*gharīza*) that God implants in most human beings and that enables them to avoid harm and act in a beneficial way. In spiritual matters, *ʿaql* allows believers to perform religious actions sincerely, thereby ensuring their salvation in the afterlife; it is the legal basis for religion, God's "proof" (*ḥujja*) against human beings. Moreover, according to al-Muḥāsibī, the intellect functions as a central tool for advancement on the spiritual path. It reaches its highest degree when it becomes an *ʿaql ʿan allāh*, i.e. an intellect that perceives reality and guides the believer in perfect accordance with the will and command of God. At this sublime stage, the intellect becomes totally absorbed in God through the contemplation of His creation (*iʿtibār*); everything in the world becomes a miraculous sign (*āyā*), an indication (*dalīl*/*dalāla*), or a trace (*athar*) from which the *ʿāqil ʿan allāh*

8 Al-Muḥāsibī, *Māhiyyat al-ʿaql wa-ḥaqīqat maʿnāhu*, in *al-Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb wa-l-jawāriḥ*, ed. Khalīl ʿImrān al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), 169–85; cf. idem, *al-Qaṣd wa-l-rujūʿ ilā llāh*, in *al-Waṣāyā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986), 251–3; Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997), 59; Josef Van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥāriṯ al-Muḥāsibī: anhand von Übersetzungen aus seinen Schriften dargestellt und erläutert* (Bonn: Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1961), 67–78; idem, *Theology*, 4:221–37; Yolande de Crussol, *Le rôle de la raison dans la réflexion éthique d'Al-Muḥāsibī: ʿAql et conversion chez al-Muḥāsibī* (*165–243/782–857*) (Paris: Consep, 2002; I am grateful to Dr. Ehud Krinis for referring me to this work and for supplying me with a partial copy of it). On al-Muḥāsibī see also Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of al-Muḥāsibī* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

infers (*istidlāl*) the existence, wisdom, and power of the one and only God.[9] A person who possesses an *ʿaql ʿan allāh* enjoys certainty (*yaqīn*) in his belief in God and in the reality of paradise and hell, fears his Lord, and above all rigorously performs God's commandments as revealed in the *sharīʿa*—those related to the limbs (*jawāriḥ*) and especially those related to the heart (*qalb*). To be sure, the heart is no less vital than the intellect for man's salvation: it is the locus of pure intentions (*niyya*, pl. *niyyāt*) when carrying out religious works, of *tawḥīd* (the realization of Divine unity) and knowledge, and the ultimate organ through which the love of God, mystical vision, and mystical "taste" take place. Nevertheless, the intellect appears to stand at the centre of al-Muḥāsibī's writing and worldview; the heart's success is completely dependent on *ʿaql*—the latter is the key instrument for contemplating God in this world, as explained above, and the main protagonist in man's spiritual battle against his lower self or ego (*nafs*) and his evil inclination (*hawā*).[10]

On the face of it, al-Muḥāsibī's discourse is theological and certain teachings of his echo Muʿtazilī conceptions, such as the idea that *ʿaql* is a God-given, natural faculty within man that enables him to avoid harmful actions and perform beneficial ones, or the conviction that one may gain true knowledge of God by contemplating His creation, by "inferring from that which is apparent concerning that which is absent (*al-istidlāl bi-l-shāhid ʿalā l-ghāʾib*)". *Istidlāl*, which perhaps derives from Hellenistic and specifically Stoic logic, was to

9 The concept of *iʿtibār* and related terms such as *tafakkur* ("reflection") or *naẓar* ("to study", "observe") is central to the Qurʾānic worldview; see the references above to Kermani and Abrahamov in n. 4. This concept is also important in *zuhd* literature; see, for instance, ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-yalīhi kitāb al-raqāʾiq*, ed. Nabīl Ṣalāh Salīm (al-Iskandariyya: Dār al-Baṣīra, 2005), 87 (in *bāb al-iʿtibār wa-l-tafakkur*). However, al-Muḥāsibī and other thinkers who will be discussed below developed this concept in new ways that differ significantly from the Qurʾān and *Ḥadīth*. On *iʿtibār* and the merits of the intellect see also al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Naṣāʾiḥ*, 129–31; idem, *al-Masāʾil fī aʿmāl al-qulūb wa-l-jawāriḥ*, ed. Khalīl ʿImrān al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), 82; idem, *al-Qaṣd*, 288–90. Note that al-Muḥāsibī is said to have authored a work entitled *Kitāb al-tafakkur wa-l-iʿtibār*, which, in any case, is now lost; see Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 88. Concerning *ʿaql ʿan allāh*, cf. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *al-ʿaql*, 51, 65; this term or variations thereof resurface in the teachings of later mystics, such as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (third/ninth century), Abu Bakr al-Warrāq (d. 293/906), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), and the Andalusī Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141); see al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 179 (*bāb al-yaqīn*); Abū l-Ḥakam ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Barrajān, *Kitāb īḍāḥ al-ḥikma bi-aḥkām al-ʿibra*, ed. Gerhard Böwering and Yousef Casewit (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 71, 140, 171, 612, 740, 750; and the relevant references below in notes 14, 29.

10 On the heart see Van Ess, *Gedankenwelt*, 35–6, 147, 215–8; De Crussol, *Le rôle*, 68–72, 365, 398, 423–4. On man's inner battle against the *nafs* see the discussion in the following paragraph.

become an important epistemological principal in the tradition of Islamic theology.[11] Yet al-Muḥāsibī's interpretation of these conceptions is mystical rather than rationalistic. In his view, the intellect serves as a means of gaining proximity to the Divine; by employing the intellect in the way described above, man is able to focus all his mental energy on God alone and assiduously observe the religious commandments that are imposed on his body and on his heart alike. Al-Muḥāsibī's understanding of *ʿaql* does not convey notions of an autonomous human intellect, of reasoning and logic; it exhibits a pietistic and fervently religious worldview that is more concerned with purifying man's inner-psychological realm and refining his ethical conduct than with refuting the opinions of intellectual adversaries.

Al-Muḥāsibī's positive attitude towards the human intellect was shared by the ninth-century idiosyncratic mystic al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and by the famous al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who were both inspired by al-Muḥāsibī's teachings in general.[12] According to al-Tirmidhī, every being has a share of "the greater intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-akbar*), which is created from the Divine "light of splendor" (*nūr al-bahāʾ*); the term "the greater intellect" naturally brings to mind the Neoplatonic "universal intellect", which will be discussed below. Although situated in the brain (*dimāgh*), the influence of the intellect reaches, or rather should reach, the spiritual organs of man; through the "chest" (*ṣadr*) and the outer layer of the heart (*fuʾād*) it penetrates the heart itself (*qalb*), the locus of man's communion with the Divine.[13] If the intellect is allowed to rule the

11 See Josef Van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed. Gustave E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), 21–50; cf. al-Rouayheb, "Theology", 409–11; Frank, "Reason", 124–9; Gimaret, *La Doctrine*, 183–91; Pessagno, "Intellect", 19–21, 24; Abrahamov, *Theology*, 26. Note, however, that al-Muḥāsibī was a fierce opponent of the Muʿtazila, at least in relation to certain issues; see Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 59–61, 80–1.

12 On al-Tirmidhī and al-Ghazālī see Sara Sviri, "The Mystical Psychology of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmiḏī" (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 1979; in Hebrew); Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmiḏī: ein islamischer Theosoph des 3./9. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1980); Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and the extensive bibliography given there; Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and his Revival of the Religious Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Concerning al-Muḥāsibī's impact on al-Tirmidhī and al-Ghazālī, see Sviri, "Psychology", 271–2; Margaret Smith, "The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1936): 65–78; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), index, "al-Muḥāsibī"; cf. Aloys Sprenger, "Notice on the Dawâ' dâ' al-qulûb of Mohásaby …," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 25 (1856): 136–8; Van Ess, *Gedankenwelt*, 16–19.

13 The linkage between the intellect, Divine light, and the heart brings to mind the definition of the intellect as "a light in the heart", a definition mentioned by al-Muḥāsibī (see

lower self or ego and subdue the evil inclination, the believer's worship of God becomes purified and he gains knowledge of Divinity by means of the intellect. Like al-Muḥāsibī, al-Tirmidhī maintains that the believer in this state is able to study (*naẓar*) God's creation and thus learn of Him and His attributes. In fact, the spiritual differences between human beings in general and prophets or *awliyāʾ* in particular are determined by their "share" of the Divine intellect, in addition of course to their devotional efforts and their primordial election by God.[14] Still, one should not get carried away by this seemingly intellectualist discourse; more so than al-Muḥāsibī, al-Tirmidhī emphasized the mystical aspect of the encounter between Man and God, which takes place primarily in the heart. The intellect plays a central role in preparing the way, but the

al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql*, 170; cf. idem, *al-Qaṣd*, 251). The connection between the root *ʿ.q.l.* and the term *qalb* is already established in the Qurʾān (see 22:46; cf. 7:179). However, the tripartite link between the intellect, the heart, and light is found in second/eighth-century Shīʿi traditions (see Van Ess, *Gedankenwelt*, 70; idem, *Theology*, 1:432; Amir-Moezzi, *Guide*, 9) and resurfaces in certain Sufi teachings from the third/ninth century onwards (see the references to al-Kharrāz and al-Nūrī below in n. 25, 29). Such a link and the notion of spiritual senses in general appear to have at least some of their roots in Late-Antique Christianity; see Adrian C. Pirtea, "Die "geistigen Sinne" in der ostsyrischen christlichen Mystik: Untersuchungen zum Wahrnehmungsbegriff und zur Gotteserkenntnis in der griechischen und syro-orientalischen asketischen Literatur der Spätantike" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2017); Paul. L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, eds., *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

14 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī maʿrifat aḥādīth al-rasūl*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), 2:389–90 (*aṣl* 279); idem, *Kitāb sīrat al-awliyāʾ*, in *Drei Schriften des Theosophen von Tirmidh*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1992), 22, 33–4, 104; idem, *Jawāb al-Masāʾil al-latī saʾalahu ahl sarakhs ʿanhā*, in *Drei Schriften*, 139, 145, 148, 150, 168; Sara Sviri, "Words of Power and the Power of Words: Mystical Linguistics in the Works of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002): 221–5. The high status of the intellect is even more evident in *Bayān al-farq bayna l-ṣadr wa-l-qalb wa-l-fuʾād wa-l-lubb* attributed to al-Tirmidhī (ed. ʿĀṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007]). In this work (ibid., 44–8), the intellect is identified with the *lubb*, the innermost core of the heart, which is under the direct control and protection of God Himself and which functions as the source of "the light of Divine unity" (*nūr al-tawḥīd*). Although the authenticity of this work is not without doubt (see Bernd Radtke, "Some Recent Research on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī," *Der Islam* 84 [2006]: 40–1, 53), it nevertheless reflects the merging of Tirmidhian and Muḥāsibian teachings. For example, the taxonomy of intellects in *Bayān al-farq*, the notion that the human intellect is basically a natural faculty, the idea of *ḥujja*, and the concept of *ʿaql ʿan allāh* all echo al-Muḥāsibī's discussions of *ʿaql*; see *Bayān al-farq*, 46–7; concerning *ʿaql ʿan allāh* see also *Jawāb al-Masāʾil*, 142–3; *Jawāb kitāb min al-rayy*, in *Drei Schriften*, 191.

encounter itself is profoundly unintellectual and the mystic, facing God, remains utterly stupefied; the light of the intellect is overcome by Divine lights.[15]

Al-Ghazālī held a very similar, favourable view of the intellect. Following al-Muḥāsibī, he defined the intellect as a *gharīza* that yields both correct knowledge and proper ethico-religious behaviour. The intellect enables man to verify his religious beliefs, to gain true knowledge of all things (including Divinity), and eventually to draw close to God. *ʿAql* is a vital faculty of the heart and essentially or often signifies the same as *qalb* and other terms that similarly point to the spiritual and God-cognisant core of man: *laṭīfa* (man's "subtle" entity), *al-nūr al-ilāhī* ("the Divine light" within him), *nūr al-baṣīra* ("the light of inner vision") or *al-baṣīra l-bāṭina* ("the hidden inner vision"), *nūr al-īmān* ("the light of faith"), and *ʿayn al-yaqīn* ("the eye of certainty"), etc.[16] Naturally, the use of the intellect must be founded upon revelation or tradition, i.e. the Qurʾān and Prophetic *sunna*, just as the understanding of tradition must be aided by the intellect:

> The intellect cannot do without tradition [*al-samāʿ*, literally: "hearing"], and tradition cannot do without the intellect. He who summons [people] to merely follow [tradition] blindly (*al-taqlīd*) while entirely dismissing the intellect is an ignoramus, whereas he who is content with the intellect alone, devoid of the lights of the Qurʾān and *sunna*, is deceived. Beware not to adhere to any one of these two groups, but rather join the two roots together.[17]

The theory of *iʿtibār*, which we encountered above in al-Muḥāsibī's works and to a certain extent in the teachings of al-Tirmidhī, likewise figures in the oeuvre of al-Ghazālī; the latter in fact added elements to this theory that are of particular interest to the current discussion. In *Kitāb al-tafakkur* of his famous *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* ("The Revivification of the Religious Sciences"), al-Ghazālī attempts to define concepts such as *fikr* or *tafakkur* ("reflection"), *iʿtibār* and

15 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sīra*, 76; Sviri, "Psychology," 200–5, 220–31 and the sources cited there on p. 325.

16 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 1:116–24, 4:1008 (*kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, bayān maʿnā l-nafs …*), 5:1551–2, 7:1957 (*kitāb al-maḥabba, bayān anna ajall al-ladhdhāt …*). For a further discussion and additional references see Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and its Avicennian Foundation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 17–29. On the centrality of the intellect in al-Ghazālī's worldview see also Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Supreme Way to Know God," *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 141–68; idem, *Theology*, 49–50.

17 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:1025 (*kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, bayān ḥāl al-qalb …*).

*naẓar*, and discusses their significance for man's spirituality.[18] According to al-Ghazālī, these concepts embody the religious obligation to contemplate one's own self and God. Concerning the former, the act of reflection or contemplation is meant to purify the inner-psychological dimension of man and to correct his ethical behavior vis-à-vis God and fellow man; it is an essential tool for *muʿāmala*, the "spiritual practice" that is applied to both the exterior (*ẓāhir*) and interior (*bāṭin*) parts of man, viz. to his limbs (*aʿmāl al-jawāriḥ*, "religious actions imposed on the limbs") and to his heart alike (*aʿmāl al-qulūb*, "actions imposed on the hearts"). As to God, *tafakkur* or *iʿtibār* ultimately enable man to reach *mukāshafa* ("unveiling"), that is, to gain knowledge of Divinity. Given that the vast majority of believers cannot perceive the Divine attributes directly (not to mention the Divine essence, *al-dhāt*), they must learn about God indirectly, through *istidlāl*—by contemplating the "miraculous signs", "traces", and "evidence" (*shawāhid*) in creation that indicate God's existence, His wisdom, power, and so forth.[19] The process of contemplation is meant to transform the believer so that he will aspire to the afterlife rather than to life in this world. It is an intellectual and rational process—al-Ghazālī defines *fikr*/*tafakkur* and *iʿtibār* as acquiring knowledge on the basis of syllogisms—and, at the same time, has a profound mystical aspect.[20] Contemplation begins with the human organism itself, and, having slowly ascended through the various realms of nature and the different heavens, the contemplating mind eventually reaches the Divine worlds, "the kingdom of the heavens and the earth" as witnessed by Abraham (Qurʾān 6:75–9):

> Oh intelligent one (*al-ʿāqil*), allow your thought to roam about the kingdom (*fa-ajil … fikraka fī l-malakūt*), and perhaps the gates of heaven will open up for you and you will roam about its different parts with your heart (*fa-tajūlu bi-qalbika*) until your heart will stand in front of the throne of the Merciful One … The closest thing to you is your own self [or: soul], then the earth, which is your abode, then the air that surrounds you, then the plants and animals and that which is on the face of the earth … then the seven heavens with their stars, then the footstool, then the throne, then the angels who are the carriers of the throne and the treasurers of the heavens. From there you will then transcend

18 Ibid., 7:2108–40.

19 See, for instance, ibid., 2123 (*bayān majārī l-fikr*), 2133 (*bayān kayfiyyat al-tafakkur …*).

20 On syllogism and *fikr*/*tafakkur* or *iʿtibār* see ibid., 2111–4 (*bayān ḥaqīqat al-fikr …*). On logic in al-Ghazālī's thought in general see al-Rouayheb, "Theology", 411–16.

> and observe (*al-naẓar ilā*) the Lord of the throne and footstool, [the Lord of] the heavens, the earth, and that which is between them.[21]

Various elements combine to form al-Ghazālī's mystical ascension: the figure of Abraham and "the kingdom of the heavens and the earth"; the principal of *istidlāl*; the concept of *iʿtibār* (or *tafakkur, naẓar*) and the idea that contemplation entails a mental ascent through the cosmic echelons up to the Divine worlds, where man finally encounters his Lord and in fact perceives Him with his inner vision; the role of the intellect and heart as illuminated, spiritual organs that facilitate this vision; and relevant terms like *jawalān* and its derivatives (*ajil, tajūlu*). Significantly, these various elements are all found in Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonic works, composed from the fourth/tenth century onwards, and in the famous epistles of "the Sincere Brethren" (*Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*). In general, the link between contemplation and ascension to the upper worlds is a central theme in the Neoplatonic tradition as it developed in Late Antiquity and following the advent of Islam.[22] To be sure, contrary to Andalusī mystical writings that will be discussed further on in this article, Neoplatonic cosmology is missing in al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb al-tafakkur*, though it is implied in other works of his (see below). It is clear, at any rate, that al-Ghazālī's positive attitude towards *ʿaql* does not derive solely from the heritage of al-Muḥāsibī; al-Ghazālī's discussions in this context betray his professional training in theology as well as his profound knowledge of Ismāʿīlī or Ikhwānian Neoplatonism and Avicennian philosophy, a topic to which I shall return below.[23]

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21 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 7:2137.

22 Altmann and Stern, *Israeli*, 185–95; for Ismāʿīlī sources see Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 221–9. On the Ikhwān—an unknown group of Muslim Neoplatonists who were active in the fourth/tenth century (presumably in Iraq) and who were affiliated in one way or another with the Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī milieu—see Godefroid De Callataÿ, "Brethren of purity (ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ)," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition and the bibliography given there. Note the Ikhwānian use of terms like *ʿayn al-baṣīra* ("the eye of inner vision"), *ʿayn al-qalb* ("the eye of the heart"), and *nūr al-ʿaql* ("the light of the intellect"; Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 226). Similar expressions appear in al-Ghazālī's oeuvre (see the references above in n. 16) and resurface in the writings of the Andalusīs Ibn Masarra and Ibn Paqūda (on whom see below). They seem to have at least some of their roots in the Platonic and Pre-Islamic Christian traditions; see Pirtea, "Sinne"; Gavrilyuk and Coakley, *Senses*, 7 and index, s.v. "eyes"; Treiger, *Knowledge*, 124n8.

23 On the impact of Avicennian philosophy on al-Ghazālī see Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1992); Griffel, *Theology*; Treiger, *Knowledge*; M. Afifi al-Akiti, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnūn*, *Tahāfut*, and *Maqāṣid*, with Particular Attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events," in *Avicenna and his Legacy: A*

## 3 Psychomachia and the Sufi Rejection of the Intellect

A second strategy that Muslim mystics developed in order to meet the challenge of *ʿaql* and that once again found one of its earliest formulations in the writings of al-Muḥāsibī entailed the juxtaposition of the intellect or reason with the base and negative forces within man, viz. lust (*shahwa*) and the evil inclination. *ʿAql* was assigned the tasks of safeguarding the believer against his carnal desires, subduing his egoistic tendencies, and purifying his intentions when performing religious works. Al-Muḥāsibī, as explained above, had allotted the intellect an additional, more significant role, in viewing it as a necessary platform for contemplating God's signs in creation and consequently for advancing on the spiritual path; his positive view of *ʿaql* was also shared by al-Tirmidhī and al-Ghazālī, who likewise both emphasized the important function of the intellect or reason in combating the lust and evil inclination.[24] However, many other mystics—specifically, those who belonged to the Sufi tradition, which had begun crystallizing in the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world towards the end of the third/ninth century—perceived the intellect as a limited and potentially harmful faculty. True, it may serve as a strong weapon in the *jihād* or raging battle against the satanic powers that seek to control man through his *nafs*; yet it is of no use when trying to comprehend the mysteries of Divinity or existence at large. The utility of *ʿaql* was therefore restricted to the inner-psychological realm of man and to his ethical conduct, whereas the answers to his existential and metaphysical concerns and the keys to his salvation were placed at the mercy of the heart. *ʿAql* may be good for establishing *ʿubūdiyya* or *khidma* ("servanthood"), but not for perceiving things Divine.[25] Many Sufis in the classical period thus rejected the human

*Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 51–100.

24 See al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Riʿāya li-ḥuqūq allāh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n. d.), 92–4; idem, *Kitāb al-riyāʾ*, in *al-Riʿāya*, 189–90, 248–52; idem, *al-ʿAql*, 184; Van Ess, *Gedankenwelt*, 81–7; Picken, *Spiritual Purification*, 175–6, 187–8, 201, 203; al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir*, 2:309 (*aṣl* 262) and the references above in n. 14; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 1:119–20, 122, 4:1011–12 (*kitāb sharḥ ʿajāʾib al-qalb, bayān amthilat al-qalb …*); cf. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *al-ʿAql*, 51, 69–70. On psychomachia in general see Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 207–10 and the references given there.

25 See, for example, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 69; Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd b. Muḥammad, *Fī l-farq bayna l-ikhlāṣ wa-l-ṣidq*, in *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, ed. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader (London: Luzac, 1976), 49–51; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 57 (on Ibn al-Kātib and al-Qirmīsīnī), 292 (*bāb al-tawḥīd*, al-Junayd's saying); Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-ḥaqāʾiq*, in *Rasāʾil al-kharrāz*, ed. Qāsim

intellect as a tool for attaining proximity to God and often denunciated it as an obstacle to man's spiritual quest, preferring the mantra-like recitation or "recollection" of God's name(s) (*dhikr*), ecstasy (*wajd*), and at times even perplexity (*ḥayra*) to reasoning and thought. This predominant Sufi attitude is best reflected in a statement ascribed to the Baghdādian Sufi Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907–8), in which he is said to have proclaimed, "the intellect is impotent and only points to that which is impotent like it (*al-ʿaql ʿājiz lā yadullu illā ʿalā ʿājiz mithlihi*)".[26] Note the verb "points to" (*yadullu*), which obviously evokes the principle of *istidlāl* (from the same root), so fundamental to Islamic theology and to the mystical teachings of al-Muḥāsibī and the later al-Ghazālī. Al-Nūrī's proclamation reveals a radical criticism of those Muslims—including fellow mystics—who believe that knowledge of the Divine is attainable by intellectual or reflective means. According to al-Nūrī and many other Sufis, man must abandon his normal consciousness and reason so that God may gain control of his will and faculties; it is then that the mystic "knows God by means of God".[27] Moreover, whether or not this procedure will prove successful depends solely on Divine election; only God's chosen ones, the *awliyāʾ*, who have been

al-Sāmarrāʾī (Baghdad: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī l-ʿIrāqī, 1967), 47; al-Sulamī, *al-Muntakhab min ḥikāyāt al-ṣūfiyya*, in *Rasāʾil ṣūfiyya li-abī ʿabd al-raḥmān al-sulamī*, ed. Gerhard Böwering and Bilal Orfali (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2009), 50; idem, *Ṭabaqāt*, 51, 138, 235, 239, 408, 422, 438; Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb*, ed. Saʿīd Nasīb Makārim, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2007), 1:241, 254, 257 (*faṣl* 30).

26 Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī l-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden: Brill, 1914), 40; cf. al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf*, 69–71; (pseudo-Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī), *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1964), 105–6 (where the saying is presumably attributed to Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, d. ca. 245/859–60); al-Sulamī, *al-Muntakhab*, 38 (presumably attributed to Abū ʿAlī l-Rūdhbārī, d. 322/933); cf. below n. 29. On al-Nūrī see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 11–15.

27 This phrase or variations thereof are widespread in Sufi literature and are attributed to different figures such as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (third/ninth century), al-Nūrī, and even the Prophet himself. In addition to the references in the previous two notes, see, for example, al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumaʿ*, 104, 130; *ʿIlm al-qulūb*, 87, 98, 105, 108; Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Sahlajī, *al-Nūr min kalimāt abī ṭayfūr*, in *Shaṭaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa l-Miṣriyya, 1949), 129. An ambivalent and sceptical view of *ʿaql* is also reflected in the teachings of the idiosyncratic mystic al-Niffarī (fourth/tenth century); see Arthur J. Arberry (ed.), *The Mawáqif and Mukhátabát of Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbdi ʾl-Jabbár al-Niffarí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 28–9, 36, 86, 115, 117, 145, 204, 206 (in the Arabic text); Paul Nwyia, *Trois oeuvres inédites de mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1973), 202–3, 214–16, 217–19, 229–30, 255, 258, 269, 314–16. On al-Niffarī see Arin Salamah-Qudsi, "Remarks on Al-Niffarī's Neglect in Early Sufi Literature," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41.4 (2014): 1–13.

designated prior to the creation of the world or in primordial times, may enjoy such a privilege. This is clearly a mythic, anti-intellectualist vision.[28]

Even Sufis who were more receptive to theological thought, or alternatively, were somewhat more sympathetic towards *ʿaql* could not fully break away from the negative attitude delineated here. For instance, the famous Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) accorded the intellect or "the understanding of the intellect" (*fahm al-ʿaql*) a certain, positive role in the mystical voyage of man alongside the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the heart, in addition to its task of combating the lust and evil inclination. Like al-Muḥāsibī, he defined *ʿaql* as a *ḥujja* or "proof" against human beings. However, al-Tustarī did not develop any theory of the intellect that is comparable to what one finds in al-Muḥāsibī's *Māhiyyat al-ʿaql* or in the writings of al-Tirmidhī and al-Ghazālī; on the contrary, he seems to have emphasized at times the limited nature of *ʿaql*, in contradistinction to the heart, which is, in his eyes, the true protagonist in the mystical journey of man.[29] The Ashʿarī-Shāfiʿī al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) offers another such example. Similar to al-Ghazālī, al-Qushayrī was exposed to and influenced by theology (though not philosophy) and he fervently adopted theological modes of thinking and writing—primarily in the formulation of basic creeds, in his

28 See Michael Ebstein, "Covenant (Religious) Pre-Eternal (*ʿahd, mīthāq*)," in *EI*[3]; see also, for example, al-Qushayrī, *Tafsīr al-qushayrī l-musammā laṭāʾif al-ishārāt*, ed. Saʿīd Quṭayfa, 6 vols. in 3 (Cairo: al-Maktaba l-Tawfīqiyya, 1999), 1.2:271–3.

29 See Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-tustarī*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil ʿUyūn al-Sūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2007), 86, 90, 162; Gerhard Böwering, *Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qurʾānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 154–6, 159, 195, 199, 225, 239, 242, 245–53, 256, 258, 260–1; see also the statement attributed to Sahl by Ibn al-ʿArabī in his *Kitāb al-isfār ʿan natāʾij al-asfār*, in *Rasāʾil ibn al-ʿarabī* (Ḥaydarābād: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1948), 2:#24, p. 27. Compare al-Tustarī's conception of *ʿaql* to that of al-Nūrī as reflected in his *Maqāmāt al-qulūb* (in *al-Taṣawwuf al-baghdādī wa-l-taṣawwuf al-khurāsānī: thalāth rasāʾil*, ed. Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī [Beirut: al-Warrāq, 2013], 30; and cf. above n. 26). According to the *Maqāmāt*, the heart contains three lights: the light of *maʿrifa* (i.e. knowledge of the Divine), the light of the intellect, and the light of *ʿilm* (presumably 'ordinary' religious knowledge, or knowledge of correct religious conduct). The intellect, which is linked to the struggle against lust, is clearly inferior to *maʿrifa*: "the light of *maʿrifa* hides the evil inclination; the light of the intellect hides lust; and the light of *ʿilm* hides ignorance (*jahl*). By means of the light of *maʿrifa* one sees the Lord, may He be exalted; by means of the light of the intellect one advances [towards] the truth/Truth [or perhaps: accepts the truth, see Paul Nwyia's edition in *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 44 (1968), 137]; and by means of the light of *ʿilm* one performs works / acts in accordance with the truth [or perhaps: by means of the Truth, *yaʿmalu bi-l-ḥaqq*]". *Maʿrifa* is like the sun, whereas the intellect is like the moon; it is through the former that the mystic's consciousness becomes totally immersed and obliterated in the Divine. Cf. al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1:490–1 (*faṣl* 32, *maqām* 6).

attitudes towards such issues as anthropomorphism in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*, and in his defense of Sufi beliefs and practices. The core of his teachings remained nevertheless Sufi, and, accordingly, his mystical writings appear to reflect a condescending attitude towards the intellect and especially towards those who believe that it is vital for obtaining the truth. In al-Qushayrī's view, the intellect may well serve as a means for combating the evil inclination of man and for establishing the elementary stratum of one's religious belief and knowledge, but this basis must be reinforced by additional levels of certainty (*yaqīn*) and true knowledge (*ʿirfān, maʿrifa*) that are only attainable through mystical unveiling (*kashf/mukāshafa*), mystical vision (*mushāhada/shuhūd/ʿiyān*), and Divine revelation (*tajallī*). In order to reach such sublime degrees, it is essential to rid oneself of one's *ʿaql* and its powers of thought and reflection and become totally immersed in *dhikr*; the intellect is of no use at this point and is in fact totally obliterated when facing the Divine.[30] All in all, viewing the human intellect with suspicion and often with contempt as well as criticizing philosophers or theologians for their overreliance on reason and logic are commonplace in Sufi writings.[31]

30 See, for instance, al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 72 (*bāb fī tafsīr alfāẓ …* on *tawājud*), 81–2 (on *muḥāḍara*), 89 (on *yaqīn*), 387–8 (*bāb al-waṣiyya li-l-murīdīna*); idem, *Laṭāʾif*, 1.1:31–3, 35, 57–8, 100–1, 206–7, 212–13, 254–5, 266–7, 290v2, 1.2:61, 71, 170–1, 185, 272, 276–7, 2.1:81, 92, 121, 169, 218, 227–8, 2.2:86, 114, 206, 286, 311, 3.1:50, 86–7, 126, 161, 206, 281, 302, 391, 410, 3.2: 152, 231–2; cf. ibid., 3.1:218, 3.2:95. On al-Qushayrī's theological inclinations see Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar: Abū l-Qasim al-Qushayrī and the Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012), esp. 220–36; Eli Stern, "Protection from Sin in al-Qushayrī's Thought" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University, 2010; in Hebrew); cf. Frank, "Knowledge", 58–61; and vol. 2.1 (2013) of *Journal of Sufi Studies*. On Sufis in the classical period and their attitudes towards theology, see Karamustafa, *Sufism*, esp. 96–108; Florian Sobieroj, "The Muʿtazila and Sufism," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 68–92; Toby Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 258–87; Martin Nguyen, "Sufi Theological Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 325–43.

31 In addition to the references in the previous notes, see, for instance, Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Jullābī l-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, ed. Valentin Zhukovskii (Leningrad, 1926), 342–52 (trans. into English by Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Ṣúfiism* [Leiden, Brill, 1911], 268–74); Hellmut Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār*, trans. John O'kane (Brill: Leiden, 2003), 28–9, 77–90, 173, 176.

## 4 "And Appoint the Intellect as Your Ruler": Neoplatonism in the East and West

The encounter between Muslim mystics and Neoplatonism generated major changes in the history of Islamic mystical thought, not least among them the attitude towards *ʿaql*.[32] As mentioned above, al-Ghazālī's positive view of the intellect betrays the impact, inter alia, of Ismāʿīlī or Ikhwānian Neoplatonism and Avicennian philosophy. This is particularly evident in his enigmatic treatise *Mishkāt al-anwār* ("The Niche of Lights"). In this work, the intellect stands at the centre of man's spiritual quest; it is linked to or said to reside in the heart, and is equated with the spirit (*rūḥ*) and soul (*nafs*) in the philosophical sense of the term (i.e. *al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*, "the rational/speaking soul"). What is more, the intellect in the *Mishkāt* seems to correspond to and reflect a cosmic principal, or rather principles that mediate between God and the corporeal world. Al-Ghazālī describes these cosmic principles as lights ultimately emanating from God, the one and only real light in the full sense of the word; they are embodied in the luminous substances of angels, which are organized in a hierarchal fashion, and serve as both the source of prophetic-mystical knowledge and the goal of prophetic-mystical ascensions. True, al-Ghazālī views prophetic-mystical knowledge and experiences as transcending the "class" or "limit" (*ṭawr*) of the intellect; however, "the holy prophetic spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī l-nabawī*), which enables prophets and certain *awliyāʾ* to obtain such knowledge and experiences, may be seen as a continuation and intensification of the lower two spirits of the intellect and of logic-based reflection (*al-rūḥ al-ʿaqlī* and *al-rūḥ al-fikrī* respectively). Thus, prophetic-mystical "taste" (*dhawq*) does not contradict or erase intellectual knowledge, but rather complements and deepens it.[33] The cosmological scheme of the *Mishkāt* is nevertheless rather obscure; it is not entirely clear whether al-Ghazālī had in mind the Fārābian-Avicennian theory of ten intellects, or, perhaps under the impact of Ismāʿīlī or Ikhwānian Neoplatonism, the classical Neoplatonic triad (One—universal intellect—universal soul).[34] Such ambiguity as to

32 See Michael Ebstein, "Emanation (*Fayḍ*) in classical Islamic Mysticism," in *Brill Handbook on Sufi Cosmology*, ed. Christian Lange and Alexander Knysh (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

33 Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār wa-miṣfāt al-asrār*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Sayrawān (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1986), esp. the first *faṣl* and the beginning of the second (119–59); concerning *al-rūḥ al-qudsī l-nabawī* and its superiority over *ʿaql* and *fikr*, see ibid., 165–71 and Treiger, *Knowledge*, 74–8; cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 1:116.

34 See Griffel, *Theology*, 245–64, 253, 281–4; idem, "Al-Ghazālī's Cosmology in the Veil Section of his *Mishkāt al-Anwār*," in *Avicenna and his Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 27–49; Hermann Landolt, "Ghazālī and "Religionswissenschaft": Some Notes on the *Mishkāt al-Anwār*," *Asiatische Studien* 45 (1991): 19–72; Daniel De Smet, "L'Attitude ambivalente d'al-Ġazālī envers

the precise cosmological scheme is similarly apparent in *Maʿārij al-quds fī madārij maʿrifat al-nafs* ("The Stairways to Holiness in concerning the Paths of Self-Knowledge"), a most intriguing Ghazālian work that was either written by al-Ghazālī himself (perhaps in his earlier years) or was composed by an anonymous author who was influenced by al-Ghazālī's teachings.[35] In the *Maʿārij*, the intellect takes centre stage, even more so than in the *Mishkāt*; in addition to Sufi ethical teachings, Avicennian and Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonic conceptions are clearly detectable in this highly philosophical work.[36]

To be sure, Neoplatonism enjoyed an earlier and more decisive impact on Islamic mysticism in the West, in al-Andalus, primarily via the Epistles of *Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*.[37] The Andalusī mystical tradition began with Ibn Masarra (269/883–319/931) and culminated in the oeuvre of the celebrated Ibn al-ʿArabī (560/1165–638/1240).[38] Ibn Masarra devised a distinctive Neoplatonic system

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l'ismaélisme: éléments ismaéliens dans le *Miškāt al-anwār*," in *Al-Ġazālī (1058–111). La prima stampa armena. Yehudah ha-levi (1075–1141). La ricezione di Isacco di Ninive: secondo Dies Academicus, 7–9 Novembre 2011*, ed. Carmella Baffioni et al. (Roma: Bulzoni, 2013), 37–52; Khalil Andani, "The Merits of the *Bāṭiniyya*: Al-Ghazālī's Appropriation of Ismaʿili Cosmology," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 29.2 (2018): 181–229.

35 See *Maʿārij al-quds fī madārij maʿrifat al-nafs* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1975); Arthur S. Tritton, "Maʿārij al-Quds," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22.1 (1959): 353; Georges Vajda, "Le maʿāriğ al-quds fī madāriğ maʿrifat al-nafs attribué à al-Ġazālī et les écrites d'Ibn Sīnā," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 470–3; Jules L. Janssens, "Le *maʿârij al-quds fî madârij maʿrifat al-nafs*: un élément-clé pour le dossier Ghazzâlî-Ibn Sînâ?" *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire de Moyen Age* 60 (1993): 27–55; M. Afifi al-Akiti, "The Three Properties of Prophethood in Certain Works of Avicenna and al-Ġazālī," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, ed. John McGinnis (Brill: Leiden, 2004), 189–212; Griffel, *Theology*, 289n35.

36 For example, in addition to expressions like "intellects" (*ʿuqūl*) and "the active intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*) that bring to mind the Fārābian-Avicennian decimal system, one may find in the *Maʿārij* discussions and terms that point to the Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonic scheme of the Divine command—universal intellect—universal soul; see, for instance, *Maʿārij*, 175–81.

37 See Godefroid De Callataÿ, "Magia en al-Andalus: Rasāʾil Ijwān al-Ṣafāʾ, Rutbat al-Ḥakīm y Gāyat al-Ḥakīm (Picatrix)," *Al-Qanṭara* 34.2 (2013): 297–343; idem, "From Ibn Masarra to Ibn ʿArabī: References, Shibboleths and Other Subtle Allusions to the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* in the Literature of al-Andalus," in *Labor limae. Atti in onore di Carmela Baffioni* (*Studi Maġrebini* 12–13), ed. Antonella Straface et al. (Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", 2014–15), 217–67; idem, "Again on Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Ibn Khaldūn: New Evidence from Two Manuscripts of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*," *Al-Qanṭara* 37.2 (2016): 329–72; Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and his Place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought. Including an Edition and a Translation of *Kitāb al-Dawāʾir al-Wahmiyya* Known as *Kitāb al-Ḥadāʾiq*" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010; in Hebrew); Casewit, *Mystics*, index, s.v. "Brethren of Purity"; Michael Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?" *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015): 196–232.

38 On Ibn Masarra see the references in the following note; for basic introductions to the life and thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The*

of thought that appears to owe much to the Ikhwān, or perhaps to a milieu that gave rise to the Ikhwān.[39] Ibn Masarra's worldview revolves around the aforementioned concepts of *iʿtibār* and *istidlāl*, which, according to him, entail a mental ascension to the upper worlds, described in explicit Neoplatonic terms. In his *Risālat al-iʿtibār* ("The Epistle on Contemplation"), Ibn Masarra presents the reader with a vertical road map, as it were, for traversing the various echelons of the universe; at the climax of this spiritual-intellectual voyage, the mystics or "friends of God" (*awliyāʾ*) encounter the universal intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) and then discover God Himself. The counterpart of the universal intellect within man (the microcosm) is the individual intellect, which is in fact the very organ that enables the mystic to "contemplate" creation and ascend to its spiritual summit. "Allah", writes Ibn Masarra, "has established for His servants intellects, which are a light from His light, for the sole purpose that they may perceive through them His command (*amrahu*) and recognize His power/decree (*qadarahu*)…".[40] One may note the quasi-scientific elements in Ibn Masarra's description of the contemplation of nature, which are reminiscent of the Ikhwān's Epistles.[41] This seemingly scientific study of nature and the idea of a mental ascension to the upper worlds, conceived of in Neoplatonic terms, set Ibn Masarra's *iʿtibār* and his conception of *ʿaql* apart from those of al-Muḥāsibī, though both thinkers hold that the human intellect must be subjugated to revelation.[42]

Under the impact, inter alia, of Ikhwānian Neoplatonism, Iberian mystics and certain philosophers in the fifth/eleventh–sixth/twelfth centuries continued to develop the concept of *iʿtibār* and the related notion of a mental

*Life of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993); William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York press, 1989); idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York press, 1998); Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993); see also http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/.

39 See Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra and His *Epistle on Contemplation*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009): 201–53; De Callataÿ, "Philosophy and Bāṭinism in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra's *Risālat al-Iʿtibār* and the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 41 (2014): 261–312.

40 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Masarra l-Jabalī, *Risālat al-iʿtibār*, ed. Pilar Garrido Clemente, in *Miscelánea de Estudios Àrabes y Hebraicos* 56 (2007): 90. On the individual and universal intellects see also ibid., 92, 97–9; idem, *Kitāb khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf wa-ḥaqāʾiqihā wa-uṣūlihā*, ed. Pilar Garrido Clemente, in *Al-Andalus Magreb* 14 (2007): 61, 67, 69, 73–5, 77–8, 88.

41 For details see De Callataÿ, "Philosophy".

42 See Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 220–1 and n. 122.

ascension, as is evident in a number of Andalusī sources: *al-Hidāya ilā farā'iḍ al-qulūb* ("Guidance to the Religious Duties of the Hearts"), written in Judeo-Arabic by the Jewish Rabbi Baḥya b. Paqūda (active presumably in the second half of the eleventh century); *Kitāb al-dawā'ir al-wahmiyya* ("The Book of the Imaginary Circles"), composed by the Muslim poet, grammarian, and philosopher Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (444/1052–521/1127); and the works of the Muslim mystics Ibn Barrajān (ca. 450/1058 to 536/1141) and Ibn al-ʿArabī. Akin to the Neoplatonic works of the Jewish mystic-philosopher Solomon b. Gabirol, who was likewise active in eleventh-century al-Andalus, Baḥya b. Paqūda's *al-Hidāya* may be seen as a mirror reflecting intellectual fashions that were probably equally current among Muslim Andalusī mystics of the eleventh century, a period for which we possess rather limited evidence concerning the Islamic mystical scene in the Iberian Peninsula.[43] Baḥya was greatly inspired by both al-Muḥāsibī and the Ikhwān as well as by the Muʿtazilī-Jewish theology of Saʿadya Gaʾōn (d. 942); unsurprisingly, his attitude towards the human intellect differs significantly from the prevalent Sufi view.[44] In his *Hidāya*, which revolutionized Rabbinical Judaism by incorporating the Muḥāsibian concept of "the duties of the hearts", Baḥya accorded the intellect a major role on the spiritual path of man, notwithstanding its subordination to the *sharīʿa* (i.e. the *tōra* or *halacha*).[45] In addition to its important task of waging the greater *jihād* (*al-jihād al-akbar*, viz. the inner war against the lust and evil inclination of man),[46] the intellect is vital for substantiating religious tenets—above all

43 This is not to say that Baḥya was a Neoplatonic philosopher like Ibn Gabirol; rather, both thinkers adopted in varying degrees Neoplatonic teachings and conceptions, many of which were derived from the Ikhwānian corpus. On Ibn Gabirol and his Neoplatonic philosophy see Jacques Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol: étude d'un néoplatonisme* (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

44 From this perspective, Baḥya was not so much a Sufi as a follower of Saʿadya Gaʾōn, the Ikhwān, and particularly al-Muḥāsibī; see Vajda, *La Théologie ascétique de Baḥya Ibn Paquda* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1947), 24–33, 139; Amos Goldreich, "The Possible Arabic Sources for the Distinction between 'The Duties of the Organs' and 'The Duties of the Hearts'," *Teʿūda* 6 (1988): 179–208, esp. 201n109 (in Hebrew); cf. Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya Ibn Paqūda's Duties of the Heart* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Certain teachings of al-Muḥāsibī may have also reached Baḥya via Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*, although Baḥyā's positive attitude towards the intellect diverges significantly from that of al-Makkī and is much closer to al-Muḥāsibī's approach; cf. Saeko Yazaki, *Islamic Mysticism and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī: The Role of the Heart* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 145–73; Goldreich, "Sources", 206–7.

45 On "the duties of the hearts" and the role of the intellect in their performance see, for instance, Baḥya b. Paqūda, *Tōrat ḥōvōt ha-llevavōt*, ed. Yōsef Qāfeḥ (Jerusalem: ʿAqīvā Yōsef, 1973), 13–43, 136–56, 244–5, 257–9, 331–2, 341–6, 363.

46 Ibid., 133–5, 156–84, 247–75, 308–9.

the belief in God's unity (*tawḥīd*). *Naẓar* (rational examination), *istidlāl* (as defined above), and *iʿtibār* (to which Baḥya dedicated the second chapter of the *Hidāya*) are all essential tools by which man gains knowledge of God and His attributes. Contemplation of nature (the macrocosm) and the self (the microcosm) are paramount in this context and constitute a religious-legal obligation; in fact, by means of the intellect the believer acquires knowledge of God through Divine inspiration (*ilhām*), a process corresponding (though obviously not equal) to prophetic revelation (*waḥy*).[47] Moreover, the intellect is a luminous substance originating in the supreme-spiritual or supreme-intellectual world (*al-ʿālam al-aʿlā l-rūḥānī, al-ʿālam al-ʿaqlī l-aʿlā*); the purpose of the intellect or soul is to reach a conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with God's "supreme light" (*al-nūr al-aʿlā*) in the world to come, or perhaps even in this life.[48] As in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* and *Maʿārij*, the exact cosmological scheme of the *Hidāya* remains unclear, but its philosophical-mystical discourse is quite reminiscent of Ikhwānian parlance; both Baḥya and the Ikhwān contend that the process of *iʿtibār* and *istidlāl* eventually leads to a mystical experience in which the believer sees God "with the eye of his intellect" (*bi-ʿayn ʿaqlihi*).[49] It is no wonder that Baḥya urges his reader to "appoint the intellect as your ruler" (*wa-jʿal al-ʿaql amīraka*), in words echoing Ikhwānian references to the *ʿaql*.[50]

47 Ibid., 47–126, 144, 156; cf. Warren Z. Harvey, "Averroes and Maimonides on the obligation of philosophic contemplation (*iʿtibār*)," *Tarbiz* 58 (1989): 75–83 (in Hebrew). Note that in his discussion of *iʿtibār*, Baḥya likewise made creative use of a polemical work entitled *Kitāb al-dalāʾil wa-l-iʿtibār ʿalā l-khalq wa-l-tadbīr* ("The Book of Proofs and Contemplation Concerning Creation and [Divine] Governance"; published in Aleppo by Muḥammad Rāghib al-Ṭabbākh in 1928). This work is attributed to the famous al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9), but was probably written by a Christian theologian sometime in the tenth century or perhaps earlier (according to Van Ess, *Theology*, 4:235–6, it was composed around the middle of the ninth century by the Christian Jibrīl b. Nūḥ b. Abī Nūḥ al-Anbārī, and its correct title is *Kitāb al-fikr wa-l-iʿtibār fī l-dalāʾil ʿalā l-khāliq*). It similarly inspired the author of *Kitāb al-ḥikma fī makhlūqāt allāh* ("The Book of Wisdom in Allāh's Created Beings"; ed. Ibrāhīm Amīn Muḥammad in *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-imām al-ghazālī* [Cairo: al-Maktaba l-Tawfīqiyya, n.d.], 5–49), who was either al-Ghazālī himself or a follower of his teachings. See David H. Baneth, "The Common Teleological Source of Bahye Ibn Paqoda and Ghazzali," in *Magnes Anniversary Book*, ed. Jacob N. Epstein et al. (Jerusalem: University Press, 1938), 23–30 (in Hebrew); Lobel, *Dialogue*, 117–45. The relation (if any) between *Kitāb al-dalāʾil wa-l-iʿtibār* and the Epistles of the Ikhwān has yet to be examined.

48 Ibn Paqūda, *Ḥōvōt*, 134, 139, 142, 229, 378–82, 410.

49 Ibid., 348; cf. Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ wa-khullān al-wafāʾ*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), 2:73, 152, 3:310–2, 336–7, 4:167–8; idem, *al-Risāla l-jāmiʿa*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā, 2 vols. (Damascus: Al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī l-ʿArabī, 1949–51), 1:452–5.

50 Ibn Paqūda, *Ḥōvōt*, 429; cf. Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil*, 3:156, 174, 4:127, 380. The Shīʿī-Platonic background of the expression *wa-jʿal al-ʿaql amīraka* is evident in al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumaʿ*, 130, where an almost identical phrase (*man jaʿala ʿaqlahu amīrahu* …) is attributed to ʿAlī, and

The centrality of the intellect is likewise evident in al-Baṭalyawsī's philosophical work *Kitāb al-dawā'ir al-wahmiyya* (known erroneously as *Kitāb al-ḥadā'iq*, "The Book of Gardens"), which reveals the impact of the Ikhwān's *Rasā'il*, among other sources. This work was extremely popular (either in its original Arabic or through Hebrew translations) among Jewish philosophers and Kabbalists in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond, and was also known to Ibn al-ʿArabī (see below). Similar to Ibn Masarra and the Ikhwān, al-Baṭalyawsī views the act of mental contemplation as entailing an ascent to the spiritual world of the ten intellects, at the climax of which the philosopher may even envision the Creator Himself.[51]

## 5 "For the Intellect Is from the World of Constraint"

A less favorable and more skeptical view of *ʿaql*, which appears to be in tune with the prevalent view among eastern Sufis, is reflected in the writings of the Andalusī mystics Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī.[52] Certainly, in line with his Andalusī predecessors (Ibn Masarra in particular), Ibn Barrajān perceived *iʿtibār* as the axis around which religious life ought to revolve. According to him, by studying the Qurʾān, the human organism, and creation at large, and by deciphering the miraculous signs or "verses" (*āyāt*) that are scattered within

in Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (d. 668/1269–70), *ʿUyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Maktbat al-Ḥayāt, 1965), 82, where this exact phrase is ascribed to Plato (read *amīrahu* instead of *amīnahu*); see also Amir-Moezzi, *Guide*, 6–13. Note that Baḥya likewise describes the intellect as man's benevolent vizier (*wazīr*; *Ḥōvōt*, 177, 179). Similar references to the intellect resurface in certain works of Ibn al-ʿArabī that presumably belong to an early stage of his writing career; see, for instance, Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb ʿAnqā' mughrib fī khatm al-awliyā' wa-shams al-maghrib* (Cairo: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣubayḥ wa-Awlāduhu, 1954), 6; idem, *al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya fī iṣlāḥ al-mamlaka l-insāniyya*, in *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-ʿArabī*, ed. Henrik S. Nyberg (Leiden: Brill, 1919), 104, 133, 135, 152, 157–61; and below n. 59.

51 See Eliyahu, "al-Baṭalyawsī"; on contemplation and the spiritual ascension see ibid., 85–7 (in the Introduction), 12–14, 21, 23–8 (in the Arabic text). The famous *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* by Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185; see Léon Gauthier's second edition and French translation, *Hayy Ben Yaqdhân: roman philosophique d'Ibn Thofaïl* [Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1936]) is another important philosophical example or manifestation of the Andalusī tradition of *iʿtibār*. The latter concept and related terms are indeed central to the *Ḥayy* and reappear throughout this work. I hope to discuss this in a forthcoming article on Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Ṭufayl. On Ibn Ṭufayl see Taneli Kukkonen, "Ibn Ṭufayl," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition and the rich bibliography given there; see also Godefroid de Callataÿ, "Did the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' Inspire Ibn Ṭufayl to his Ḥayy Ibn Yaqdhān?" *Ishraq* 4 (2013), 82–9.

52 This also seems to be the case with the Andalusī mystic Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151); see Ebstein, "Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?", 217–18.

these three dimensions, the mystic is able to "cross" or pass from the visible to the invisible realm (*al-ʿibra min al-shāhid ilā l-ghāʾib*), thereby entering into contact with the hereafter. Ibn Barrajān often refers to this contemplative "crossing" as a mental ascent to the upper-spiritual worlds. However, despite the important role assigned to the intellect in this process, Ibn Barrajān—contrary to Ibn Masarra—seems to have somewhat downgraded *ʿaql*. In his view, the intellect must be rectified by and subordinated to "the light/spirit of faith" (*nūr/rūḥ al-īmān*), a God-given faculty that enables Divine inspiration (*ilhām*) and facilitates the visionary experience or witnessing (*mushāhada*) of the unseen; for "the intellect in its essence [or: in itself] is limited, whereas faith is not (*al-ʿaql fī dhātihi maḥdūd wa-l-īmān laysa bi-maḥdūd*)".[53] This ambivalent and reserved attitude towards the intellect is reflected in Ibn Barrajān's harsh criticism of the philosophers and in his cosmology. Notwithstanding the impact of Ikhwānian thought on his teachings, Ibn Barrajān did not adopt the Ikhwānian Neoplatonic scheme of the universal intellect and soul, preferring instead a non-philosophical cosmology that is based on the scriptural-Qurʾānic depiction of the cosmos. The disappearance or 'withdrawal' of the intellect from the universal plane (the macrocosm) is paralleled by its reduced role in the spiritual quest of man (the microcosm).[54]

Ibn al-ʿArabī's oeuvre merits special attention here, given its tremendous influence on subsequent generations of mystics.[55] On the one hand, in continuation of Ibn Masarra's heritage and under the impact of Ikhwānian thought, *al-shaykh al-akbar* fervently adopted Neoplatonic cosmology, placing, accordingly, the universal intellect at the summit of creation.[56] The universal intellect serves not only as the hard disk, so to speak, of creation, but also functions as

53 Ibn Barrajān, *Sharḥ asmāʾ allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazyadī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2010), 1:189; see also ibid., 1:277, 301–5, 317–18, 336, 348–62, 380; idem, *Īḍāḥ*, 70, 96, 108, 154–5, 208, 233, 240, 283, 349, 376, 419, 440, 445, 447, 505, 612, 676, 696, 700, 726, 746, 751, 773, 849; Casewit, *Mystics*, 266–79.

54 For Ibn Barrajān's cosmology, see ibid., 280–94; cf. Ibn Barrajān, *Īḍāḥ*, 727. Ibn Masarra was likewise critical of the philosophers, but his criticism appears to have been less severe than that of Ibn Barrajān; his teachings in general are closer in spirit to the worldview of the Ikhwān. See the reference above in n. 42.

55 My understanding of Ibn al-ʿArabī's stance on *ʿaql* differs considerably from that of Binyamin Abrahamov, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Theory of Knowledge (part 2)," *Journal of the Muḥyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 42 (2007): 1–22, esp. 9–22; idem, "Rationality and Rationalism in Islamic Mysticism: The Case of Ibn al-ʿArabī," in *Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Yohanan Friedmann and Christoph Markschies (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 270–88.

56 Ebstein, *Mysticism*, index, s.v. "ʿAql".

one of the sublime destinations in the mental ascension of the mystic.[57] Within the microcosm, Ibn al-ʿArabī accorded *ʿaql* an important role in the spiritual development of man, namely in the inner struggle against the evil inclination and lust. Ibn al-ʿArabī combines in this context Neoplatonic motifs and taxonomies of the soul with Sufi ones, and his discussions often echo Ikhwānian conceptions.[58] As we have seen above, viewing the intellect or reason as a protagonist in the inner *jihād* of man is also characteristic of classical Sufi thought, and indeed, similar to the Sufis, Ibn al-ʿArabī subordinates the intellect, which, according to him, resides in the brain, to the heart or to the Divine spirit (*rūḥ*) that resides in the heart. Still, as in Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonic sources and the Epistles of the Ikhwān, in various passages in *al-shaykh al-akbar*'s oeuvre the spirit and the intellect are intimately linked on the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels alike; all in all, Neoplatonic ideas are quite evident in many such passages.[59]

On the other hand, when one closely examines the nature and function of the universal intellect in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, one discovers that it is far removed from any notion of intellectuality; it does not embody a rational cosmic

57 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb, 12 vols. (Tarim: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 2010), 4:128–31 (chapter 72, *waṣl fī faṣl ramy l-jimār*), 5:481–508 (chapter 167); cf. ibid., 7:35–44 (chapter 273). Concerning mystical and prophetic ascensions see also ibid., 9:83–120 (chapter 367); idem, *Kitāb al-Isrāʾ ilā l-maqām al-asrā aw kitāb al-miʿrāj*, ed. Suʿād al-Ḥakīm (Beirut: Dandara, 1988); idem, *Risālat al-anwār*, in *Rasāʾil ibn al-ʿarabī* (Ḥaydarābād: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1948), 1:#12 (cf. the discussion in Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 147–82); idem, *al-Isfār*, esp. 17–22, 39–40; James W. Morris, "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn ʿArabī and the Miʿrāj," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107.4 (1987): 629–52, 108.1 (1988): 63–77.

58 Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 203–12.

59 This is especially true of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Kitāb al-tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya fī iṣlāḥ al-mamlaka l-insāniyya* ("The Book of the Divine Governance in/concerning the Reformation of the Human Kingdom"), the core of which seems to have been composed early on in his writing career; see Addas, *Quest*, 129. On the *Tadbīrāt* and the close link between the spirit and the intellect see the reference in the previous note. On the brain as the seat of the intellect or of the rational/speaking soul—rather than the heart, as is commonly thought to be the case in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition and in Islamic theology (see Gimaret, *La Doctrine*, 183n1; Van Ess, *Gedankenwelt*, 35n8)—see Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil*, 2:386; Ibn Paqūda, *Ḥōvōt*, 111; *Kitâb maʿânî al-nafs: Buch vom Wesen der Seele*, ed. Ignaz Goldziher (Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1907), 27, 41–2; Ibn Barrajān, *Sharḥ*, 1:355–7; idem, *Īḍāḥ*, 240; cf. Judah Ha-Levi, *Kitāb al-radd wa-ʾl-dalīl fī-ʾl-dīn al-dhalīl* (*al-kitāb al-khazarī*), eds. David H. Baneth and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1977), 61, 178, 203, 207; and for al-Tirmidhī see above n. 14. On the medical-philosophical debate in Antiquity concerning the location of intellectual or cognitive processes, see Philip J. van der Eijk, "The Heart, the brain, the blood and the pneuma: Hippocrates, Diocles and Aristotle on the location of cognitive processes", in his *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity: Doctors and Philosophers on Nature, Soul, Health and Disease* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119–35.

principal, but is rather portrayed in mythic terms and colored by Ibn al-ʿArabī's mystical imagination. For instance, *al-shaykh al-akbar* states that the universal intellect was originally one of the

> Bewildered angelic spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-malakiyya l-muḥayyama*), those who have no knowledge of anything other than Allāh. They know not that Allāh has created other things besides themselves. They are the Cherubs (*al-karūbiyyūna*), those who are drawn close to Allāh [*al-muqarrabūna*, see Qurʾān 4:172 and more], who worship Him assiduously (*al-muʿtakifūna*), who are isolated and are snatched from themselves by the majesty of the Truth that He has caused them to witness.[60]

To the "bewildered" angels correspond the human *afrād*, the "solitary ones", those who populate the highest degree of the saintly hierarchy (below the messengers and the legislative prophets); even the "pole" (*al-quṭb*), who receives his "spiritual substance" (*mādda*) from the universal intellect, cannot exercise his authority over them, although originally he was one of them. These ideas are clearly a reflection of mystical beliefs and experiences, not philosophical concepts. To be sure, the identification between angels and the universal intellect and soul (or the first and active intellects in the decimal systems) is likewise found in philosophical writings, including Ismāʿīlī Neoplatonic works.[61] However, whereas the philosophers were trying to interpret the traditional concept of angels in accordance with Hellenistic cosmology and philosophy, Ibn al-ʿArabī was attempting to accomplish exactly the opposite, that is, to reformulate philosophical ideas so as to fit the Islamic tradition and his own mystical heritage. Thus, "angels" does not indicate the universal intellect and soul, as the philosophers claimed, but quite the reverse: the philosophical notion of cosmic powers or principles points in actual fact to the traditional concept of angels. By the same token, *al-shaykh al-akbar* identifies the universal intellect with *al-ḥaqīqa l-muḥammadiyya*, "the true reality of Muḥammad", which signifies the Divine-metaphysical root of "the perfect human being"

60 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 7:277 (the beginning of chapter 295). See also ibid., 1:423 (chapter 13), 576–7 (chapter 30), 5:396 (chapter 154), 550–1 (chapter 177, *al-nawʿ al-thānī*), 6:249 (chapter 198, *faṣl* 11), 398 (chapter 206); Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 101n34, 107.

61 Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 152n89; to the sources quoted their add Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman, *Kitāb al-fatarāt wa-l-qirānāt al-ʿashara*, MS Institute of Ismaili Studies (London), 726, pp. 17, 133–4, 179; Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil*, 3:328; idem, *al-Jāmiʿa*, 2:33; Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 117, 163–4; Griffel, *Theology*, 200, 256, 280; and, concerning Ibn Qasī, see the reference in the following note.

(*al-insān al-kāmil*) as embodied in the prophets and their heirs, the mystics, throughout sacred human history. Ibn al-ʿArabī derived this mythic concept from early *ḥadīth*s that discuss "the light of Muḥammad" (*nūr muḥammad, al-nūr al-muḥammadī*) as well as from his Andalusī precursors Ibn Qasī and Ibn Barrajān; he may have also been inspired in this matter by the teachings of eastern Sufis such as Sahl al-Tustarī and al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[62]

The de-intellectualization of Neoplatonic notions is also reflected on the microcosmic level. Following al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ghazālī, his Andalusī predecessors, and the Ikhwān, *al-shaykh al-akbar* views the contemplation or study of creation (*iʿtibār, naẓar*) as a positive spiritual exercise and indeed defines it as a religious-legal obligation incumbent upon man. Yet contrary to his forerunners, Ibn al-ʿArabī did not place *iʿtibār* at the centre of his worldview; far from it. Contemplation may yield true knowledge, but only if this knowledge is God-given (*mawhūb*), resulting from mystical unveiling (*kashf*/*mukāshafa*), mystical witnessing (*shuhūd*/*mushāhada*), and mystical tasting (*dhawq*). Such knowledge inevitably entails awareness of *tajallī* and *ẓuhūr*—the ontological revelation of Divinity in creation and the ongoing manifestation of God in every created being and in every changing form (*ṣūra*).[63] Conversely, *ʿaql*-based contemplation aims at discovering signs and traces of a distant, transcendent Creator that is beyond creation; it is therefore an inferior spiritual method and is hardly recommended.[64] Unsurprisingly, *al-shaykh al-akbar*'s description of the ascension to the upper worlds in chapter 167 of *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* ("The Meccan Revelations") is mainly designed to criticize the philosophers' reliance on *ʿaql*. Only the mystic, who abandons reason and meticulously follows the Qurʾān and *sunna*, succeeds in reaching the highest echelons of the

62 Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 143–56; idem, "Was Ibn Qasī a Ṣūfī?", 217–21, 226–7, 232n136; Casewit, *Mystics*, 171–90.

63 On the concept of *tajallī*/*ẓuhūr* see the relevant chapters in Chittick's *Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *Self-Disclosure*.

64 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 5:99–100 (chapter 78), 528–30 (chapter 174), 538–42 (the Introduction to chapter 177), 6:516–20 (chapter 226), 604–5 (chapter 257), 9:258–62 (chapter 369, *waṣl* 20), 10:215–17 (chapter 420); cf. Denis Gril, "L'Interprétation par transposition symbolique (*iʿtibār*) selon Ibn Barrajān et Ibn ʿArabī," in *Symbolisme et herméneutique dans le pensée d'Ibn ʿArabī*, ed. Bakri Aladdin (Damascus: IFPO, 2007), 147–61. The positive aspects of *iʿtibār* and the intellect are nevertheless emphasized in *al-Tadbīrāt*, 200–7, where Ibn al-ʿArabī appears to follow the Muḥāsibian-Ghazālian line of thought; as mentioned above (n. 59), this work or at least parts of it seem to have been composed early on in his writing career. Note also that in his discussions of *iʿtibār-naẓar* and the correspondences between the macrocosm and the microcosm, Ibn al-ʿArabī often quotes the Qurʾānic verse 41:53, much like Ismāʿīlī authors and the Ikhwān; see, in addition to the references given in this note, Ebstein, *Mysticism*, 215–6.

universe; his companion, in contrast, who initially chose to employ his intellect and power of reasoning (*naẓar*), fails and falls behind in their joint journey, only to repent and acknowledge at the end the superior status of the mystic.[65] We may recall at this point Ibn Masarra's ascension, carried out precisely by means of the intellect, "a light from His light"; much indeed has changed in the attitude towards *ʿaql* among Andalusī mystics since the early tenth century.

Furthermore, in his writings, and especially in his magnum opus, the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-ʿArabī' more often than not strongly condemns any reliance on the intellect and on its powers of rational reflection and rational examination (*fikr, naẓar, naẓar ʿaqlī, naẓar fikrī*). To be sure, *ʿaql* does possess certain positive qualities. As mentioned above, it may serve as an important ally in the inner battle against the negative forces of the soul; it may likewise assist in maintaining law and order and in safeguarding the public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) during periods in which no prophets are sent (*fatra*, pl. *fatarāt*)—a function, however, that is obviously no longer valid in the post-Muḥammaden era. In addition, in a number of passages *al-shaykh al-akbar* attempts to distinguish between *ʿaql* itself, which is somewhat neutral, and its faculties of *fikr* and *naẓar*, which bring about errors.[66] Yet this distinction is not always maintained in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works, and is rather inconsequential; what exactly remains of an intellect deprived of independent thought, reflection, and reason? On the whole then, and in line with many eastern Sufi authorities, Ibn al-ʿArabī views the human intellect as a detriment to the correct understanding of religion and of reality at large. In Ibn al-ʿArabī's eyes, the flaws of the intellect are many: it typically leads to doubts and faulty conclusions, causing disputes and disagreements among scholars; unlike imagination (*khayāl*), it is unable to correctly understand anthropomorphic verses and *ḥadīth*s and cannot fathom or maintain the delicate balance between the transcendent and immanent dimensions of Divinity (*tanzīh-tashbīh*);[67] it cannot prescribe commandments that facilitate proximity to God nor can it independently arrive at knowledge of eschatological events and the afterlife;[68] and most importantly, it is unable

65 See the reference above in n. 57.

66 See, for instance, Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 2:245–8 (chapter 66), 249–53 (chapter 67), 4:320–1 (chapter 73, *al-ṣā'imūna wa-l-ṣā'imāt*), 333–4 (*al-ajnād al-ilāhiyyūna*), 9:258; for the distinction between *ʿaql* and *fikr*/*naẓar* see also the references below in n. 71.

67 On *khayāl* and *tanzīh-tashbīh* see the relevant chapters in Chittick's *Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *Self-Disclosure*.

68 The claim that human reason is insufficient to obtain conclusive knowledge of eschatological affairs seems to be derived from al-Ghazālī; see, for instance, Alexander Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science," *Dîvân* 30.1 (2011): 19; Griffel, *Theology*, 115–6.

to perceive the secret of *tajallī*/*ẓuhūr*. The intellect is essentially a dangerous faculty that must be restricted. The true mystic ought to become an *ummī* ("illiterate") like the Prophet—he must abandon *ʿaql* and its faculties of reasoning and reflection in order to empty his consciousness from anything other than God.[69] Only then, having pursued the path of piety, devotion, and *askesis* (however defined), does the mystic arrive at his desired goal: God—if He so wishes and has thus preordained—assumes control of the mystic's faculties, granting him true knowledge.[70] Consequently, "he will know all things by means of Allāh and will know Allāh by means of Allāh".[71]

Because God constantly manifests Himself (through His Divine names) in the numerous phenomena of creation, the only organ that is able to perceive and receive this ever-fluctuating Divine revelation is

> The heart of the lover, not his intellect nor his senses. For the heart changes [*yataqallabu*, from the same root as *qalb*] from one state to another, just as Allāh, who is the Beloved One, is 'every day upon a task' [Qur'ān 55:29].[72] The lover then varies in respect of that to which his love cleaves in accordance with the varying of the Beloved One in His actions … This is only true of the heart. For the intellect is from the world of constraint

69 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 7:209–15 (chapter 289; note the criticism there of al-Ghazālī); on the concept of *ummiyya* see also William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York, 1983), 36.

70 See Michael Ebstein, "The Organs of God: *Ḥadīth al-Nawāfil* in Classical Islamic Mysticism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138.2 (2018): 271–89.

71 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 5:538–9. On the intellect and its problematic aspects see also ibid., 2:121–5 (chapter 58), 152 (chapter 62), 160–1 (chapter 63), 179–80 (chapter 64, *waṣl ikhtilāf al-nās* …), 236–7 (chapter 65), 256–7 (chapter 67), 265–6 (chapter 68, *al-mā' mā'āni*), 284 (*ḥukm al-masḥ fī l-bāṭin*), 327–8 (*bāb al-ightisāl li-l-wuqūf bi-ʿarafa*), 351–8 (*abwāb al-tayammum*), 3:26 (chapter 69, *waṣl fī faṣl al-ghusl yawm al-jumʿa*), 65–6, 74–5 (*ḥukm sujūd al-sahw, mawāḍiʿ sujūd al-sahw*, and *sujūd al-sahw li-mawḍiʿ al-shakk*), 4:27–9 (chapter 72, *waṣl fī faṣl wujūb al-ḥajj ʿalā l-mar'a* …), 208–9 (*ḥadīth*s 9–10), 5:157–8 (the end of chapter 90), 521–3, 525 (chapter 172), 6:360–2 (chapter 198, *faṣl* 45), 396 (chapter 206), 7:72–5 (chapter 277), 139–40 (chapter 285), 305–6 (chapter 298), 8:531–2 (chapter 360, *niyāba* 7), 9:324 (chapter 371, *faṣl* 3), 10:218–25 (chapter 421), 11:136–7 (chapter 542), 208–9 (chapter 558, *al-ḥaḍra l-ilāhiyya*); idem, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Mahmud E. Kiliç and Abdurrahim Alkiş (Istanbul: Litera, 2016), 170–5 (on Ilyās); idem, *al-Isfār*, 7, 27, 42–4, 61–2; idem, *Dīwān dhakhā'ir al-aʿlāq: sharḥ tarjumān al-ashwāq*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Shuqayrī (Cairo: ʿAyn li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Buḥūth al-Insāniyya wa-l-Ijtimāʿiyya, 1995), 196–7, 201, 249–50, 281–2, 330–2, 339–40, 384, 396, 403, 407, 416, 433, 439, 441–2, 461, 474.

72 For the significance of this verse in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, see the references in Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 434.

> (*ʿālam al-taqyīd*), and that is why it was called *ʿaql*, from *ʿiqāl* [a shackle or rope for binding the folded leg of a camel] …[73]

It is interesting to compare Ibn al-ʿArabī's etymological explanation of *ʿaql* with that of the Ikhwān. In relating to the universal intellect, which contains every existing form, the Ikhwān write that it was called *ʿaql* "because it has confined (*ʿaqala*) [all] things within it, reckoning and counting them, as [Allāh], glory be to Him, said: 'He has reckoned and fully counted them' [Qurʾān 19:94]".[74] This positive view of the intellect stands in stark contrast to the ambivalent and often negative attitude towards *ʿaql* in *al-shaykh al-akbar*'s oeuvre.[75]

## 6 Conclusion

The preceding discussion has been of a very broad and general nature; such a bird's-eye view, as it were, no doubt has its pitfalls and drawbacks. Future studies that will focus on individual authors mentioned above and their attitudes towards *ʿaql* will surely produce more nuanced and perhaps even contradictory findings. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that this article has centered on one specific spiritual organ or faculty, namely the intellect; yet in order to fully appreciate and fathom the worldview of any given mystic, other elements in the human psyche need to be considered—first and foremost the heart, which typically serves as the focus of Islamic mystical psychology and

73 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 4:569–70 (chapter 73, question 117); see also ibid., 2:124–5, 5: 617–18 (chapter 178, *waṣl aḥwāl alqāb al-ḥubb*), 6:48–9 (ibid., *minaṣṣa wa-majlā … ʿalā qadr ʿaqlihi*); Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 107.

74 Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ, *al-Jāmiʿa*, 2:304; cf. idem, *Rasāʾil*, 4:200–1.

75 In the *Tadbīrāt* (157), Ibn al-ʿArabī offers a different etymology that is much closer to the positive view of the Ikhwān: "it was called *ʿaql* only because it confines within itself from Allāh, may He be exalted, all that He casts onto it [or: because it derives its understanding of all that Allāh, may He be exalted, casts onto it from Him; *yaʿqilu ʿan allāh taʿālā kull mā yulqī ilayhi*], and because its function in the kingdom [the microcosm] is like that of a halter (*ʿiqāl*) on a beast: it prevents it from being restive". Given that the *Tadbīrāt* is presumably an earlier work of Ibn al-ʿArabī (see above n. 59), it is conceivable that his view of the intellect changed somewhat over time. One should remember however that such etymologies are not uncommon in *Ḥadīth* literature and in various mystical writings. Thus, according to a number of *ḥadīth*s, *ʿaql* derives from *ʿiqāl* since it "prevents" man from unworthy actions (see, for instance, Ibn Abī l-Dunyā, *al-ʿAql*, 49). Similarly, certain mystics hold that the term *ʿaql* literally signifies the act of "confining" the object of understanding in the mind or of "confining" ignorance; see, for instance, al-Muḥāsibī, *al-ʿAql*, 172; al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān*, 47; idem, *Jawāb al-Masāʾil*, 143; al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif*, 267 (chapter 56); cf. *al-Futūḥāt*, 3:263 (chapter 70, *waṣl fī dhikr man tajibu ʿalayhi l-zakāt*).

epistemology. Related terms such as *lubb*, *laṭīfa*, or *rūḥ* likewise merit a thorough examination.

Still, a few tentative conclusions can be carefully drawn on the basis of the foregoing survey. To begin with, it is clear that the concept of *ʿaql*, as it came to be understood from the third/ninth century onwards, posed a severe challenge for the mystics of Islam, who felt uneasy with the notion that the human intellect could and should play a central role in the interpretation of religion and in the understanding of existence and God. Certain mystics who were inspired by either theology or philosophy attempted to salvage the intellect from the deep and threatening waters of mysticism; this was the path taken by al-Muḥāsibī and al-Ghazālī in the East as well as by Ibn Masarra and Baḥya in the West. Al-Tirmidhī, who was presumably influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, may be added to this list, although his writings in general do not exhibit a strong inclination for either theological or philosophical thinking. By returning to the religious understanding of *ʿ.q.l.* in the Qurʾān and *Ḥadīth*, and by developing a theory, or rather theories, of intellectual-mystical contemplation (*iʿtibār*), the mystics mentioned here succeeded in reclaiming the human intellect and placing it at the centre of man's spiritual endeavor alongside the heart. However, the price they paid was heavy; the intellect in their mystical systems was utterly subordinated to revelation and was paradoxically configured to self-destruct itself—to show man its own limits so that he may surrender before an omniscient God and submit himself to His commandments as revealed in the *sharīʿa*. *Iʿtibār* should lead one to realize that "all the knowledge that created beings have obtained (*kull mā ʿarafahu l-khalq*) does not deserve to be called 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*) compared to the knowledge of Allāh, may He be exalted".[76] In short, *ʿaql* was transformed or converted into a sort of *qalb*, a mystical organ or faculty, albeit one that produces a very sober rather than ecstatic spiritual outlook. As a result, the intellect either became devoid of its distinctive features, namely logic-oriented reason and rationality (in the cases of al-Muḥāsibī, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Masarra), or otherwise assumed such intuitive-mystical functions that its very nature was blurred, producing ambiguity (in the case of al-Ghazālī). Such ambiguity has caused much debate among modern scholars as to the precise character of al-Ghazālī's teachings: are they Sufi in essence, or are they theological and Avicennian teachings disguised in a Sufi garb? Accordingly, should one divide the Ghazālian corpus into esoteric and exoteric writings? Or did al-Ghazālī change his mind over time?

76 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 7:1972 (*kitāb al-maḥabba … bayān al-asbāb al-muqawwiya …*).

Scholars from opposite camps have indeed done their best to harmonize at all costs the internal contradictions underlying al-Ghazālī's oeuvre.[77]

It seems to me, however, that the ambiguity surrounding al-Ghazālī's oeuvre is intrinsic to it and should not necessarily be clarified and swept away; this ambiguity reflects the diverse and often contrasting traditions that all equally influenced al-Ghazālī—theology, Avicennian philosophy, Neoplatonism as formulated in Ikhwānian and similar sources, the legacy of al-Muḥāsibī, and classical Sufi teachings. Consider, for example, al-Ghazālī's discussion of the two paths that lead to *ʿilm al-mukāshafa* and *maʿrifa* in *Kitāb al-maḥabba* ("The Book on Love") of his *Iḥyāʾ*.[78] The first path is knowledge by means of God Himself, as expressed in the saying *ʿaraftu rabbī bi-rabbī* ("I came to know my Lord by means of my Lord");[79] this is the supreme way, taken by "the strong ones" (*al-aqwiyāʾ*). On the other hand, the majority of believers, "the weak ones" (*al-ḍuʿafāʾ*), are unable to pursue this path and, accordingly, must employ the easier method of *istidlāl* and *tafakkur*, *iʿtibār*, *naẓar*, etc. The Sufi principal of *ʿaraftu rabbī bi-rabbī* that al-Ghazālī adopts here entails the rejection of the intellect and its role in acquiring knowledge; in fact, al-Ghazālī's comparison between the two paths and his preference of the first clearly echo early Sufi statements to that effect.[80] At the same time, and as mentioned above, *Kitāb al-tafakkur* in the *Iḥyāʾ* as well as most of al-Ghazālī's other works—the sheer bulk of his oeuvre—are based on the central role of the intellect and on relevant notions such as *istidlāl* and *iʿtibār*. He even goes so far as to criticize in another passage of the *Iḥyāʾ* "those groups of Sufis [or: those who pretend to be Sufis, *al-mutaṣawwifa*] who reprehend the intellect and that which is perceived by the intellect".[81] Such a fundamental inconsistency reveals, in my opinion, al-Ghazālī's own struggle with the concept of *ʿaql*.[82]

77 For details and references see the introductions to Griffel, *Theology* and Treiger, *Knowledge*.

78 *Iḥyāʾ*, 7:1969–70; cf. al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt*, 147.

79 See above n. 27.

80 See, for instance, al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf*, 69–71; al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr*, 86.

81 *Iḥyāʾ*, 1:124; cf. Arberry, *Revelation*, 108–11 and the references given there.

82 For other discussions and statements by al-Ghazālī that similarly reflect the ambiguity or inconsistency referred to here, see the many texts collected in Treiger, *Knowledge*, esp. chapters 3–4. On the face of it, al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* ("The Deliverer from Error") is an example of the *ʿaraftu rabbī bi-rabbī* approach. In this spiritual autobiography, al-Ghazālī severely criticizes the attempt by theologians and philosophers to attain or comprehend the truth by means of the intellect alone, and presents *taṣawwuf* as the best or perhaps the only true path that can lead one to God. See *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl wa-l-mūṣilu ilā dhī l-ʿizza wa-l-jalāl*, eds. Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil ʿIyād (Beirut: Dār

The case of al-Ghazālī notwithstanding, many other Sufi mystics from the third/ninth century onwards were unequivocally critical of *ʿaql* and apprehensive about its use on the mystical path. According to them, the human intellect may perform certain positive functions, primarily as a soldier or commander in the inner *jihād* against the lust and evil inclination of man, but it is essentially a limited and suspicious faculty whose influence must be restricted if communication with the Divine is truly desired. From this perspective, many Muslim mystics in the classical period distanced themselves from rationalism and intellectuality and can be situated in the "traditionalist" camp, to use Binyamin Abrahamov's terminology.[83]

It is significant that even Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī, who inherited the Neoplatonic legacy of Ibn Masarra and whose writings reveal the impact of Ikhwānian thought, reverted to the eastern-Sufi position in reducing the role of *ʿaql* in the mystical quest for God. This also seems to be the case with a number of other mystics who were active in the sixth–seventh/twelfth–thirteenth centuries and who were similarly exposed to Neoplatonic thought, although this impression naturally demands further substantiation.[84] In fact, a twofold typology appears to emerge in this context: on the one hand, one may and should distinguish between classical Sufism, as it developed in the *Mashriq* from the third/ninth century onwards, and the Neoplatonic mysticism of Ibn Masarra and his heirs in al-Andalus.[85] On the other hand, an additional distinction can be drawn within each of these two mystical traditions: between those who upheld the centrality of the intellect on the path towards God and those who sought to diminish it. The two classifications or typologies intersect; we thus find al-Muḥāsibī, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Ghazālī together with Ibn Masarra and Baḥya in the pro-*ʿaql* camp, so to speak, while many, if not most,

al-Andalus, 1967); for the different scholarly ways of interpreting the *Munqidh*, see Treiger, *Knowledge*, index, s.v. "The Deliverer from Error".

83 Abrahamov, *Theology*; cf. Sobieroj, "Muʿtazila"; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, esp. 87–96.

84 For Ibn Qasī, see the reference above in n. 52; concerning ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1235), the famous poet Rūmī (d. 672/1273), and ʿAzīz al-Dīn al-Nasafī (active mainly in the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century), see al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif*, 55 (chapter 10), 262–8 (chapter 56), 273 (chapter 57); cf. ʿArīn Salāma Qudsī, *Bayna sayr wa-ṭayr: al-tanẓīr, ḥayāt al-jamāʿa wa-bunā l-muʾassasa fī taṣawwuf abī ḥafṣ ʿumar al-suhrawardī* (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2012), 411–3; Erik S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 160, 162, 265, 298–301; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 35–7, 65–8, 124–6, 138–9, 220–6; Lloyd Ridgeon, *ʿAzīz Nasafī* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), 38–9, 54–70, 84–8, 90–7, 112, 148–9, 175.

85 On the differences between these two types of mystical discourse see the references above in n. 2.

eastern Sufis as well as Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī shared a very skeptical and often negative attitude towards the intellect. The demarcation and relation between the two typologies presented here necessitate further research; why did certain mystics interpret their Neoplatonic heritage in a non-intellectual and often in an anti-intellectual way? What were the changes in Sufi approaches to *ʿaql* in later periods, from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards, when the impact of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought in the *Mashriq* began to increase and, at the same time, the boundaries between philosophy, theology, and mysticism became even more blurred or permeable than before?

For the time being, I can propose two tentative explanations for the anti-intellectualist appropriation of Neoplatonism by mystics like Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī. First, one should consider their educational background. While Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī were no doubt well aware of and read many theological and philosophical texts, they did not receive any thorough or systematic training in these disciplines. Their works are rarely formulated or structured in accordance with what is customary in the theological and philosophical genres of writing; nor do they exhibit a very deep proficiency in logic. In contradistinction, the writings of al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ghazālī, and Baḥya clearly reflect their authors' diligent training in the juristic and theological disciplines as well as (in al-Ghazālī's case) in philosophy and logic; this training apparently served to enhance their relative openness to the role of the intellect in human religiosity. This explanation, however, fails to account for the cases of al-Qushayrī and other theologically-minded mystics in the classical period who, despite their theological background, appear to have adopted in varying degrees the skeptical view of *ʿaql* common among Sufis.

The second explanation for the anti-intellectualist appropriation of Neoplatonism by mystics like Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-ʿArabī pertains to their struggle for religious power, authority over knowledge, and the ensuing influence in the social (and at times political) sphere. Broadly speaking, many Muslim mystics in the classical period held a somewhat elitist and mythic vision of sainthood; according to them, only a selected few, a small elite within the one and only true religion (Islam), have the God-given capacity to fully realize the potentiality latent in mankind. The single most important factor in determining one's spiritual success and ensuing legitimacy in society is God's selective decree; the true saint or *walī*, "God's friend", attains his high status as a result neither of his own efforts nor of his intellect, but rather due to Divine election.[86] Hence the mystical claim for superiority over all others in Islam

86 See above n. 28. To be sure, the belief in Divine predestination is commonplace in post-Ashʿarī Sunnī Islam. Similarly, the philosophers often took an elitist stance on the

who similarly contend for the possession of true knowledge, be they exoteric scholars, jurisprudents, theologians, or philosophers; these groups rely on their intellects, whereas the mystics, "the heirs of the prophets" (*warathat al-anbiyā'*), are Divinely guided.[87] This line of thought reached its peak with Ibn al-ʿArabī, who systematically endeavored—more so than any other author before him—to establish the supreme status of the *awliyā'* and to outline their vital role for society and sacred human history. This may help to explain why despite the heavy impact of Neoplatonic philosophy on his thought, *al-shaykh al-akbar* favored the negative attitude towards *ʿaql* prevalent among eastern Sufis and chose to reject the Muḥāsibian-Ghazālian approach. One cannot claim to be God's chosen one and the supreme heir of the Prophet—more precisely, "the seal of Muḥammadan friendship with God" (*khātam/khatm al-walāya l-muḥammadiyya*), the first among the three messianic figures who are destined to bring sacred human history to its eschatological end—on the basis of one's intellect, since theologians and philosophers have intellects as well.[88] One's high status must be founded upon Divine election. Hinting at his own mission as the seal of [Muḥammadan] friendship with God, Ibn al-ʿArabī declares that "the Divine selection (*al-ikhtiṣāṣ al-ilāhī*) cannot be straitened nor is it affected by balancing[89] or [religious] deeds; it is from the grace (*faḍl*) of Allāh, who 'selects for His mercy whomsoever He wishes, for Allāh possesses much grace' [Qur'ān 3:74]".[90] Divine election is not dependent on man's religious works and efforts, let alone on his intellect.[91]

A parallel development can be observed on the Jewish side.[92] The *Hidāya ilā farā'iḍ al-qulūb* by Baḥya b. Paqūda is a unique book in the history of Jewish thought. Although it is replete with Biblical verses and sayings of the sages, it

question of whether or not the common people are able to obtain philosophical truths (see, for example, Steven Harvey, "Islamic Philosophy and Jewish Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 357–61; Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* [Oxford: Littman Library, 2007], 15–7). However, there is a fundamental difference (albeit a subtle one) between such views and the mythic notion that God has chosen a certain group of individuals before creation or in primordial times and that the world's destiny is dependent on their spiritual guidance and mediation.

87 On the idea of prophetic heritage see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*, 74–88.

88 On Ibn al-ʿArabī's messianic self-perception see Chodkiewicz, *Seal*; Addas, *Quest*, 76–81.

89 *Muwāzana*, that is, 'weighing' or comparing the actions and merits of different individuals.

90 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt*, 2:234–5.

91 See also ibid., 5:502–3; idem, *al-Tadbīrāt*, 206–7. Concerning Ibn Barrajān, cf. Casewit, *Mystics*, 278–9.

92 Cf. Sara Sviri, "Spiritual Trends in Pre-Kabbalistic Judeo-Spanish Literature: The Cases of Bahya ibn Paquda and Judah Halevi," *Donaire* 6 (1996): 78–84.

is nevertheless extremely universalist in its spirit and contents.[93] It can be read as a work that is addressed to all human beings, not necessarily (Rabbinical) Jews; Jewish history and the Land of Israel, for instance, do not constitute a central theme (to say the least) in the *Hidāya*. This universalist vision is reflected in—or perhaps generated by—the high esteem in which Baḥya holds the human intellect. Baḥya's approach reached its peak with Maimonides (d. 1204), in whose oeuvre—particularly in his philosophical magnum opus, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīna* ("The Guide of the Perplexed")—the intellect is of paramount importance. The universalist tradition of Baḥya and Maimonides was in turn adopted and developed by Maimonides' son Abraham (d. 1237) and by a number of his descendants and followers, the so-called Jewish "Sufis" or "pious ones" (*ḥasīd*s) of Egypt.[94] Conversely, a more mythic and exclusivist vision is found in *al-Kitāb al-khazarī* ("The Book of the Kuzari") or *Kitāb al-radd wa-l-dalīl fī l-dīn al-dhalīl* ("The Book of Refutation and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion"), composed by Baḥya's younger compatriot, Judah Halevi (d. 1141). Halevi was very much inspired by Shīʿī and Ismāʿīlī formulations of the ancient belief in a God-chosen community. His mythic-particularistic understanding of religion, which placed much emphasis on the Jewish people, their history, and their promised land, came at the expense of *ʿaql*; what differentiates between nations and individuals cannot be their intellectual capabilities and endeavors, but is rather God's primordial election as embodied in the Divine command (*al-amr al-ilāhī*)—a Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī concept that is likewise central to the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī.[95] The mythic-particularistic

93 To be more precise, a relatively large number of verses and sayings quoted in the *Hidāya* are culled from the more universalist strata of the Bible and Rabbinical corpora—the Prophets, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Psalms, the *Mishnah* tractate of *Avōt*, and so forth.

94 See Kellner, *Confrontation*, xi–xii, 216–64, 286–96; Paul Fenton, "Judaism and Sufism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 201–17; Elisha Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt: A Study of Abraham Maimonides and His Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For the significance of *iʿtibār, istidlāl*, and related terms as well as the importance of *ʿaql* in Abraham Miamonides' *Kifāyat al-ʿābidīna*, see, for instance, *The High Ways to Perfection*, ed. Samuel Rosenblatt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), 140–2, 188 and *The High Ways to Perfection: Vol. II*, ed. Samuel Rosenblatt (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1938), 12, 18, 44–70, 82, 128–38, 242, 246–8, 256, 312, 340–2, 376–8, 384–6. Obviously, one should differentiate between the nature and function of the intellect in the writings of Baḥya and Abraham Maimonides and those reflected in Maimonides' oeuvre; Baḥya and Abraham Maimonides are closer in spirit to the tradition or legacy of al-Muḥāsibī than to the philosophical worldview of al-Fārābī and his heirs.

95 See Israel Efros, "Some Aspects of Yehudah Halevi's Mysticism," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 141–54; Shlomo Pines,

worldview that is reflected in Halevi's *Kuzari*, with its emphasis on Divine selection, found its clearest and harshest expression in various Kabbalistic works written from the thirteenth century onwards. Reminiscent of Ibn al-ʿArabī's oeuvre, one may discern a shift in Sefirotic literature—viz. Kabbalistic theosophical works dealing with the *sefīrōt* (the ten Divine emanations)—from an intellectual to a more affectual understanding of Neoplatonic conceptions.[96] Accordingly, there seems to be a tripartite link between the status of the intellect, the intensity of mythic notions such as Divine election, and the degree of universality versus particularism in any given system of thought (at least within Judaism and Islam). Though obviously not absolute, this link and its wide-ranging ramifications should be studied further.[97]

"Shīʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 165–251; Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Ehud Krinis, *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's Kuzari and the Shīʿī Imām Doctrine* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2014); idem, "Baḥya Ibn Paqūda and Judah Halevi: Radical Judeo-Andalusian Thinkers in Conflict" (an unpublished draft, available on www.academia.edu; I thank Dr. Krinis for sharing this paper); Kogan, "Understanding Prophecy", 492–502; Michael Ebstein, "Human Action, God's Will: Further Thoughts on the Divine Command (*amr*) in the Teachings of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (560/1165–638/1240)," in *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2020), 171–90.

96 Personal communication with Dr. Judith Weiss, who is currently writing an article on this matter. On particularism in Kabbalistic works see Moshe Hallamish, "The Kabbalists' Attitude to the Nations of the World," in *Joseph Baruch Sermoneta Memorial Volume* (= *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 14), ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1998), 289–311 (in Hebrew). For universalist attitudes in Jewish theological and philosophical works, see David Sklare, "Are the Gentiles Obligated to Observe the Torah? The Discussion Concerning the Universality of the Torah in the East in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 311–46; Hannah Kasher, *High Above All Nations: Milestones in Jewish Philosophy on the Issue of the Chosen People* (Tel-Aviv: IDRA, 2018; in Hebrew).

97 Thus, the modern-Western understanding of Ibn al-ʿArabī's universalism (or that of Sufism in general) ought to be reconsidered; see Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn ʿArabī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Michael Ebstein, "'In Truth You Are the Polytheist!': Mythic Elements in Ibn al-ʿArabī's Teachings on the Divine Names," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6 (2018): 359–87.